DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 694 PS 027 627

AUTHOR	Kroenke, Lillian DeVault, Ed.
TITLE	Infant and Toddlers, A Publication for Montessori Infant and Toddler Programs, 1997-1998.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	65p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Infants and Toddlers, P.O. Box 14627, Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627 (Regular subscription, 1-year, $25; Intern Subscription, 1-year, $20).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Infants and Toddlers; v1 n1-4 Spr 1997-Feb 1998
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Child Development; Child Rearing; *Early Childhood Education; Early Intervention; Educational History; Emotional Development; Infant Behavior; *Infants; Montessori Method; Mothers; Motor Development; *Parent Child Relationship; Periodicals; Play; *Toddlers; Toys
IDENTIFIERS	Montessori Preschools

ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the first four issues of a journal published quarterly for parents of children in Montessori infant and toddler programs. Regular features include "Ask Ginny," an advice column; information on recent research; and reports on conferences. The Spring 1997 issue contains articles on the history of infant/toddler programs in the United States and a mother's study regarding her use of Montessori techniques and guidelines in full-time mothering. The Fall 1997 issue discusses the importance of the early environment and age appropriate activities and toys. The November 1997 issue includes articles on movement in infants and toddlers, emotion as the motivating factor for infants and toddlers, and young children's interests. The February 1998 issue presents information on children's independence, using journals to record memories, and the use of polyvinyl chloride in children's toys; this issue also includes a mother's story of toddler separation. (KB)

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Infants and Toddlers

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

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Vol. 1, No. 1
Infants and Toddlers

Published 4 times a year.

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Send all address changes and inquiries about subscriptions to
Infants and Toddlers
P.O. Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627.

Address all advertising inquiries and editorial correspondence to the editor:
Lillian DeVault Kroenke
PO Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627.
Manuscript and photograph guidelines are available on request.

Printed by
Elanex Publishing Services
6201 Peachtree Pl NE
Albuquerque, NM 87111-7502

POSTMASTER:Send address changes to
Infants and Toddlers
PO Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627

Cover Photos
Front: K.T. Korngold with Sarah
Back: Sarah
Photographer: Adrienne de Palo

Infants and Toddlers

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Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of *Infants and Toddlers!*

At last, an idea whose time has come is now presented in a journal dedicated to the needs and nature of the child 0-3 from the point of view of Montessori philosophy and practice around the world.

Organized by experienced infant and toddler Montessori professionals, *Infants and Toddlers* is specifically designed to keep you informed. Articles are reviewed by a panel of peers.

This journal is intended to stimulate the exchange of knowledge and experience among Montessorians everywhere, regardless of national affiliation, who are dedicated to this age group. Together we will have a wonderful opportunity to share our collective wisdom with parents and other professionals.

It is most appropriate that we begin our first edition of *Infants and Toddlers* by bringing all of you up to date on this exciting sequence of events that has stimulated years of effort and progress on behalf of the young child.

In Rome in 1949, the first infant/toddler teacher education program began. The first class in the United States started in Dayton, Ohio in the summer of 1966, but it was not until June, 1981, that the first teacher education program was launched. Interest in infant and toddler programs and teacher education programs has grown exponentially since.

We are also pleased to present the story of a young mother who has the unique opportunity to be a full-time mother for her daughter, Sarah, using Montessori techniques and guidelines. You may wish to share this story with parents in your program.

Thank you for joining us in this effort to learn more about our children, and ultimately, ourselves. We look forward to your contributions.

Lillian DeVault Kroenke

Ask Ginny...

by Ginny Varga

For this issue of *Infants and Toddlers*, we asked Ginny to respond to frequently asked questions.

Q Why should a parent stay with her child when starting in the 18 month - 3 year class?

A A parent should come with her child to a new toddler class even though the child may have been enrolled in another care program. The parent and child will need to become familiar with and learn to trust the new environment, new staff and new children. The child will feel more comfortable and confident in the new situation with the support provided by the mother's presence. The mother serves as a beacon of orientation and a refueling station for the child. It takes the mutual cooperation of the staff and parent to help the parent/child couple experience a healthy separation.

Q How long is it necessary for the parent to stay?

A It is difficult to state an exact length of time. Each parent/child couple is different as I stated above. It could be as long as three or four weeks or three or four days. A lot will depend on clear communication of the expectations of the teacher and the role of the parent while in the room. A child cannot leave a parent physically or psychologically if the parent is moving about the room, following the child around or directing her.

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

Ask Ginny...
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History of Infant/Toddler Programs in the United States

By Virginia Varga

Presented in Rome, Italy, at the Montessori International Congress, November 2-5, 1996

Life-long patterns are formed during a baby's first eighteen months. Love and trust and even ambition are learned or not learned. Babies today and tomorrow are one. This reality places a great responsibility on the adults in an infant's world, the parents and the child care providers.

Today, more people than ever before are concerned about the quality of infant care. This is especially true in homes where both parents must work. Furthermore, there is an increasing public awareness that simply fulfilling a baby's physical needs just isn't enough.

Infant child care is a relatively new phenomenon. Interest in infant research is increasing. Everyday more fascinating information is being recorded about infant development. Montessori was interested in the total development of the personality, beginning with conception.

Infant/Toddler care in the US

Infant and toddler care in the United States has evolved from the sole responsibility of parents to a growing acceptance of programs which meet the special needs of young children. In the past, parents were reluctant to leave their infants and toddlers with anyone other than family members. And there were no professionals educated to understand the unique nature of this age group.

Mothers felt guilty about sending their infants to an organized center-based program. Some were fearful and confused by the emerging research regarding the possible negative effect of child care. Much of that has changed.

Montessori infant and toddler programs in the United States began in 1966. Rita Brandimarte Messineo, a pupil of Adele Costa Gnocchi, received her diploma in 1963 in Rome, and moved to Cleveland, Ohio. Upon her arrival she was informed that Americans would not be willing to send children under 3 years of age to a Montessori school. She was advised to enroll in a pre-primary course at the Midwest Montessori Training Program in Chicago and then interned at the Ruffing Montessori School in Cleveland.

Pam Wyse, a friend and classmate of Rita's, interned with me at Gloria Dei Montessori School, in Dayton, Ohio. Pam introduced Rita to me. I was interested in learning more about the program in Italy and wondered what these young children could do. I agreed to organize a summer experimental toddler

Montessori infant and toddler care has its roots in Italy. Adele Costa Gnocchi (1883-1967), a follower of Dr. Montessori, began a private school in 1949 to teach girls to work with pregnant mothers, newborns and infants. She received her Ph.D. in philosophy and was trained by Maria Montessori in 1909. She used the writings of Maria Montessori in her book The *Absorbent Mind* as a point of departure.

In a letter addressed to Dr. Costa Gnocchi in 1950, Maria Montessori described the tasks of the first *Assistente all' Infanzia* as follows: "They shall start their task with the expectant mothers by encouraging and enlightening them with practical advice that lately has been coming into use which will facilitate delivery and nursing as well as the preparation of the environment necessary to receive the newborn. The assistant is there to assist and protect the psychic development of the infant."

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HISTORY OF INFANT/ TODDLER PROGRAMS

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program at Gloria Dei Montessori School if Rita would teach it.

First Summer Class in the US

Rita moved to Dayton for the summer of 1996 and began the very first Montessori Toddler Class in the United States. I worked as her apprentice assistant for a class of twenty children between the ages of eighteen months and two and a half years. I asked the parents who had children enrolled in our school if they would bring their toddlers for six weeks during the summer to participate in our experimental program.

They, too, were very interested to see what their little ones could do. The mothers reminded me that they would not be willing to enroll their children officially until they were three years old.

The children often cried when their parents came to pick them up. They were not ready to leave. At the end of the second week one of the mothers, speaking for the group, said, "Now you've started something. You have them. Now how will you continue?"

Year-Long Program Begins

The summer program was very successful and the originally hesitant mothers were now asking that the program continue. Rita was under contract to the Ruffing Montessori School and returned to Cleveland. Pam Wyse worked as the Toddler Directress during the 1966-67 school year. Rita fulfilled her contract and moved to Dayton in the summer of 1967.

> this first plane of development from 0-3 is the most important phase of human development and should be treated with the utmost respect. This is the time when children absorb everything in their environment, which affects the personality and lays the foundation for a secure and emotionally stable adulthood.

The second year of the program, Rita took over the class and worked with toddlers until the birth of her first child in 1970. Pam once again resumed the role of Directress for the next five years.

Interests Spread Across the US

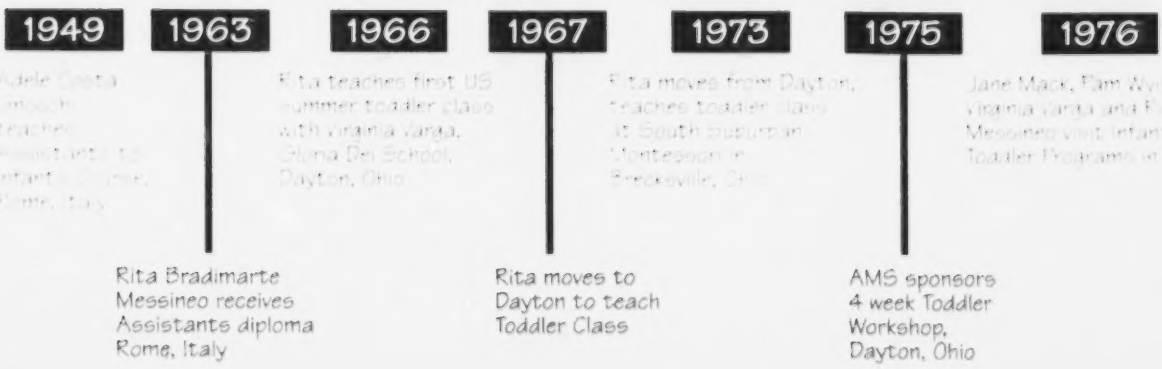
During the first twelve years, many Montessori teachers and heads of schools visited our toddler class. After approximately one hour of observation, they returned to their schools and began a toddler class. Montessorians evidently shared the common belief that anyone can care for the children from birth to 3 and did not need special training.

Planning for Teacher Education

Rita, Pam and I knew better. We were well aware of the need for an infant and toddler teacher education program in the United States. We also lacked a structure, standards, curriculum and sponsorship to begin such a program. The three of us agreed that we would not do workshops or teacher education until we could bring someone from the Birth Center in Italy to get us started. We realized the importance of this work and, therefore, wanted to provide a quality program.

The problem for us was one of language, as everyone from the Birth Center spoke Italian. I was unfamiliar with how well American

Time Line for the History of Infant/Toddler



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students would respond to a course that would need a translator. We invited Grazia Honegger Fresco to come to the United States. First she said she must learn English, which she did. Then various things happened to prevent her from coming to our training program for years. Our dream was finally realized when she came to the Center for Montessori Teacher Education, New York (CMTE/NY) in July of 1994 and again in 1995.

Determining the Interest

In the meantime, in July, 1975, Jane Mack, Chairman of the American Montessori Society Teacher's Section, Pam, Rita and I organized a four week Toddler Workshop in Dayton. The workshop was sponsored by the Teacher's Section of the American Montessori Society (AMS) for certified pre-primary Montessori directors and directresses. Our goal was to attract teachers with 3-6 certification who conducted toddler classes. I wanted these teachers to come together to share their observations and experiences.

There were twenty hard working, enthusiastic participants, none of whom had experience with the child from 0-3, but all very curious about how one would go about establishing classes to meet the needs of this age group. The more they observed Rita as she conducted the morning demonstration class, listened to lectures and participated in research and work groups, the more everyone realized the need for a full-fledged teacher education course in the United States.

Revisiting the Rome Experience

In May of 1976, Jane Mack, Pam, Rita and I went to Rome thanks to the AMS Teacher's Section. Our goal was to learn more about how Montessori 0-3 programs prepared environments and teachers to meet the changing needs of children under 3. We visited, observed and talked with staff at The Birth Center, The Montessori Training Center for Girls, as well as The Transportation Child Care Center, a private medical clinic, Ars Medica maternity ward, the Bank of Italy Child Care Center and a private school.

As a result of this experience, I became confident of our understanding, interpretation and practice of Montessori principles as applied to toddlers. I was now convinced of our growing knowledge and skills in meeting the special needs of these young children, and I felt confident enough to share our skill and knowledge with others.

Infant/Toddler Programs Spring Up Across the Country

Bretta Weiss, Executive Director of AMS, reported in the Winter Edition of *The Constructive Triangle* magazine that one fourth of approximately 400 AMS affiliated schools had classes for infants or toddlers.

There were no teacher education programs in the United States to prepare teachers to care for the child under 3. Most, if not all, classes were conducted by Montessorians

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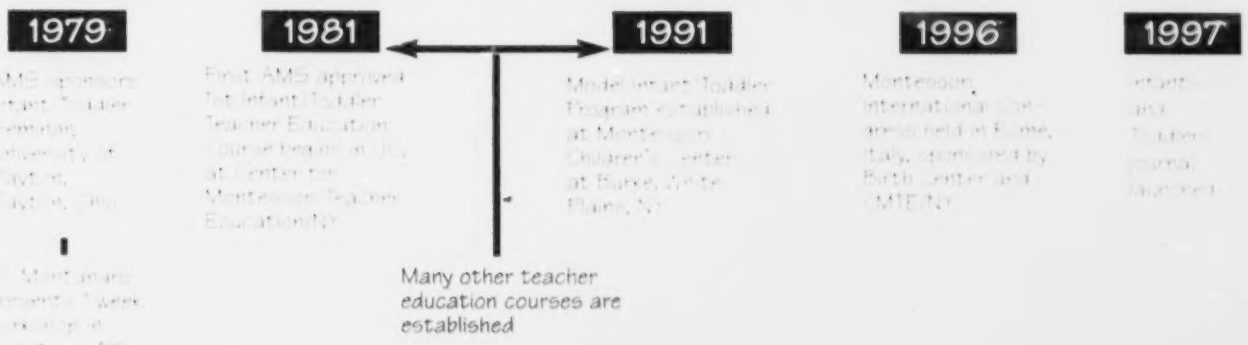
Programs in the United States



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A Mother's Story

Pt I: Choosing to Care

By K.T. Korngold

Today's Pioneers

I am a strange and unusual creature in 1997–a full-time stay-at-home mom with an infant. Like a few of my friends, I have left a demanding career to take up the most important challenge of my life–caring for my baby, Sarah.

And like the liberated women thirty years ago who had the courage to demand an equal right for fulfilling employment and equity under the law, we too are pioneers. Liberating ourselves from the intense pressures of our society to have high-powered successful careers, we choose instead to stay home to care for our children.

Trading Identities

At a time when society-at-large undermines parenting, we stay-at-home moms relinquish our professional identities to do a job we believe will impact our children's lives and the future of our world. We recognize the fortunate circumstances which enable us to afford to choose to care for our children. We are grateful that we are emotionally capable of doing this intensive and joyful work full time.

My friends have Master degrees and MBAs. This small sampling of mothers includes a landscape architect, a teacher, an investment banker, and a physician–all successful, all moving up the career and economic ladder. Yet somehow they decided to forgo their jobs or suspend their careers, and take reductions in their family incomes to be with their children.

We are a minority. Only 16 per cent of mothers in working families choose to stay home (1997). Most parents do not have this option for financial reasons. For others, the allure of the working world far outweighs the appeal of staying home. Many are not convinced of the value of staying home and devoting them-selves to the needs of a very young child. "I'd go crazy staying home all day. After all, infants just eat, sleep, and cry, right?" one professional woman said.

> We want nannies and child care providers to love our children, although we don't expect them to love our children as much as we do. But, surely, we should expect the adults who do the most important work of our future nation to do it exceptionally well.

Real Choices

The women's movement has done a remarkable job of giving women the choice of having a career, staying home or doing both. But this choice has put tremendous pressure on women of my generation to value themselves more by their professional accomplishments. "What do you do?" is the first question we ask as we get to know someone. And, unfortunately, the answer, "I'll take care of babies," does not often elicit an affirming response.

At a luncheon for new mothers, I met the mother of a four-week-old. She planned to go back to work after two months and to hire a nanny to care for her infant. Although she was entitled to take three months leave, she said, "What difference does one month make?"

"There is a real difference between leaving him at two months rather than at three," I said. I think it was the first time she heard someone argue in favor of staying with her baby.

"But I don't want him to get too attached..." she said. She thought she was protecting her child from the pain of the inevitable separation. What she failed to realized was the significance of those early weeks for her child's development, not to mention the contribution that precious time would make to the richness in their relationship as a newborn/mother couple.

Society's View

Our society-at-large tends to applaud this woman's choice, or at least to be very supportive. The loudest voices seem to say, "If Mommy is happy, baby is happy." "If you are satisfied, your baby is satisfied." "If you don't meet your own needs first, you will not be able to meet your child's needs."

Have we come so far in the celebration of the individual that we have foregone the blessings and benefits of giving fully to another human being? Have we worked so hard for the right to our independence that we are afraid to loose our identity if we subsume our needs for that of the newly born?

Infant Needs

Yet the degree to which the infant's needs are met affect their physical health, mental health, personality, emotional life, and capacity to love and learn, to thrive and to be. The 1996 Conference on Brain Development in Young Children drew national attention to the determining nature of the first three years of life for the brain development in the child.

Schaefer (1996) stated, "A child's experience in his or her first weeks, months, and years of life determine how that child will function from the preschool years through adolescence, and even into adulthood.... A child's early experiences and interactions with the world around him (/her) actually affect the physiological development of his (/her) brain."

Nash (1997) stresses the importance of the first years of life for the development of the human brain. Critical in raising the consciousness of parents and the public-at-large, this article explains why we must secure the maximum quality care to children in their first years of life–whether it is provided by parents, a nanny or a child care center. Still, little has been said as to what quality care really should look like if we are to maximize the development and growth of a healthy child.

Information Sources

Penelope Leach (1995) wrote her book, *Your Baby and Child from Birth to Age Five*, because she believed that "the more people knew about children in general, the more fascinating they would find their own child in particular." I have found this to be true for myself as I am learning to understand and appreciate my daughter, Sarah. I am eager to see more information available and absorbed by the public.

I keep a number of books at my bedside. Two I find particularly useful are *The First Twelve Months of Life* (1993) and *Develpmental Profiles: Pre-birth Through Eight* (1994). These books provided insights into Sarah's language, motor skills, mental, and social development. With clear descriptions and explanations, they help me focus as Sarah grows and changes everyday–as she stretches and arches her back while laying on her tummy on her sheepskin mat; grabs and swats at the cloth birds hanging above her changing table; thumps her feet on the hardwood floor; puts anything she can, from the smallest wooden rattle to the largest cloth ball she can hold, in her mouth; screeches with delight when she sees herself in the mirror or hums softly as I walk her in the stroller.

More information is now available than ever before through books, magazines, videos and the internet. Even the basic information about the importance of the first three years of life and what it means for the child's growth, development, and future as well as the future of our society, is not widely discussed or even accepted.

This is the first...

in a series of articles on the preparation for the arrival, the birth and care of K.T.'s daughter, Sarah. K.T. attended the Infant/Toddler course at CMTE/NY, with Virgina Varga and Grazia Honegger. Rita Messineo, the first Montessori trained Assistente all' Infanzia to come to the US, has been K.T.'s mothering mentor. Information and materials from the Birth Center in Rome are incorporated into this unique mothering experience.

A New View Needed

As Leach says, we spend far more of our resources on producing physically healthy newborns than we do on insuring their development into emotionally stable children. If we did, our society would look very different. More parents would choose to stay home, stay home longer, or work out of their homes. Businesses would provide longer leaves of absence. Child care providers would be paid better. Politicians would increase, rather than decrease, the money for publicly-funded child care programs.

The marketplace would offer equipment, toys, and materials for infants and toddlers that were truly designed to meet their developmental needs. Parents would want their nannies and child care professionals to receive formal educational training in a curriculum specifically designed for the infant and toddler. And parents might even want to take such training themselves.

Parenting Education

In 1995, I had the pleasure and fortune of attending such a class at the Center for Montessori Teacher Education/NY summer institute. The five-week course was taught by

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Recent Research Findings

summarized by Lillian DeVault Kroenke

The Effects of the Mother's Emotional State During Pregnancy

By Michel Odent

The quality of fetal life is receiving increased attention. Many doctors associate poor fetal growth with maternal nutrition. They ignore the emotional state of the pregnant woman as a probable and important factor influencing fetal development.

As a point in fact, the 'Barker hypothesis' explores a correlation between low birth weight and risk factors for cardiovascular diseases in adulthood. These diseases range from impaired glucose tolerance to raised blood pressure, high serum triglycerides, and low HDL, the good cholesterol. The Barker hypothesis implies that nutrition is the only important factor involved.

Another study on predictors of placental weight to fetal weight concludes that their data do not support the Barker correlations. Instead, the study notes that raised placental ratios reflect increased fetal exposure to maternal hormones which inhibit fetal growth.

These authors, however, do not consider that the emotional state of the mother–unhappy, depressed, or dominated by a situation or someone else–leads to high levels of the same hormones. The study stops short of suggesting that the mother's emotional state is a primary risk factor for cardiovascular diseases as the child reaches adulthood. Restricted fetal growth may be an early measurable effect.

Another study that challenges the Barker hypothesis is based on anatomical factors. A Danish team traced more than 8,000 twins born between 1870 and 1900. They found that the twins' mortality rate was not significantly different from the mortality rate of the general population, even though twins experience restricted growth during the last trimester caused by lack of space in the uterus.

Several medical studies have established a direct link between the emotional states of pregnant women and the later health of their children. A Finnish study demonstrates a higher risk of alcoholism, mental disease and criminality among children who were still in the womb when their fathers died during World War II compared to children who lost their fathers during the year following birth.

Harry Torney, an Irish dentist, studied 107 children who were breast-fed on demand for at least two years. He found that the children whose mothers experienced major stress such as bereavement during pregnancy fell into the high cavities group by the age of two.

Physiologists also tell us that the emotional states of pregnant women affect hormone balance and influence fetal growth. Opiates such as endorphins regulate cell proliferation and cell differentiation. Emotional states, including painful experiences, associated with increased levels of endorphins are likely to inhibit fetal growth.

Physicians need to be more aware of the importance of the emotional state of the pregnant woman They need to provide positive emotional support rather than suggestions which convey to the pregnant woman that something is wrong or needs to be corrected.

Odent, Michel, Back to the Nocebo Effect, Primal Health Research, 2, (4), 1 (Spring 1996).

Michel Odent shared his recent papers with Ceres Schroer-York and Victoria de Lilla after his presentation in Rome.

Benefits from Oily Sea Fish By Michel Odent

A new study indicates that a high intake of oily sea fish during pregnancy may promote full term gestation, reduce low birth weight and prevent diseases related to inadequate antioxidants. The study at an East London hospital explored the value of a twenty minute diet counseling session within the framework of the British National Health Service.

In 1991-1992, 470 women participated in a twenty minute nutritional counseling session at least once during prenatal care before twenty weeks gestation.

The women first described their dietary habits and tastes. The counseling which followed covered fetal growth and the needs of the developing brain. Counselors clarified the difference between oily sea fish and other fish as well as the contrasts between the coastal food chain and the high sea food chain. The negative effects of trans-fatty acids were explained and a selection of printed recipes were offered to match individual tastes.

Fish oil supplements do not substitute for a high intake of oily sea fish, which are rich in vitamins, minerals and high quality protein. Trans-fatty acids, which are found in foods such as cookies, cakes, French fries, fast food, and processed oils, may have adverse effects on fetal growth. No exact recommendations were given. The primary objective was consciousness raising.

A control group was established by matching each woman in the study group with a woman from the birth registry with approximately the same date of delivery and characteristics. This procedure was used to reduce any accidental interaction between members of the control group with members of the study group.

The mean birth weight was slightly higher in the study group (3284 g vs. 3349 g) and the difference persisted after adjusting for gestational age (85 g/week vs. 83 g/week). The rate of delivery before 37 weeks was lower in the study group (7.3% vs. 9.5%). The mean neonatal head circumference was greater in the study group (34.7 cm vs. 34.4 cm.

Results indicate that the benefits of increasing the intake of oily sea fish during pregnancy warrant further study.

Odent, Michel R., McMillan, Lindsay and Kimmel, Tina, (1996) Prenatal Care and Sea Fish, European Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Reproductive Biology 68, p. 49-51.

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Editor's note: There is concern in the US about mercury contamination of fish in some of our inland lakes, streams and coastal waters from industrial polution beyond that which occurs naturally in the environment. Mackerel and salmon, two oily sea fish(1), have been found to contain concentrations of mercury significantly less than the FDA limit of one part per million(2).

1. Oily Fish Helps Heart Attack Victims to Live Longer, New Scientist, (1240), October 7, 1989, p.25.

2. Fouke, Judith E., (1994) Mercury in Fish: Cause for concern?, FDA Consumer, (28), pp.5-8.

About Michel Odent

With his medical degree from Paris University and his residency in surgery and obstetrics, Michel Odent took charge of both the surgical and maternity units at the state hospital in Pithiviers near Paris.

Developing home-like birth rooms in France, he practiced home birthing in London in order to prepare a report for the World Health Organization on planned home birth in industrialized countries.

A world renowned obstetrician, he has studied childbirth in many different countries, examining what effect their culture, environment and birthing practices may have on the perinatal period.

Dr. Odent astonished the rest of the obstetrical world with his application of innovative techniques during labor and delivery. The use of water during labor, combined with low Cesarean rates, decreased incidence of espisiotomy. Positive maternal and neonatal outcomes associated Dr. Michel Odent with the very best maternal care and birth experiences.

He founded the charity organization, Primal Health Research Center in London to explore the correlation between the primal period (fetal life, perinatal period and early infancy) and health later in life. Michel Odent has authored more than twenty articles on many aspects of this issue and is widely published in the international press.

He has authored seven books published in English covering such topics as *Entering the World, Birth Reborn, Primal Health, The Nature of Birth and Breastfeeding, and Water and Sexuality.* Two books, *We are all Water Babies and Zinc and Health,* were coauthored.

Father of three and grandfather of three, Michel Odent's compelling presentation entitled, *For the First Bonding; Quality Birth, immediate and Free Breastfeeding,* was enthusiastically received at the 1996 Montessori International Congress in Rome, Italy.

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HISTORY OF INFANT/ TODDLER PROGRAMS

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with pre-primary certification and experience which requires a different attitude and set of skills.

Schools began classes for many different reasons. Some schools saw it as an opportunity to introduce parents with younger children to Montessori theory and practice when it should be more beneficial. Other schools saw the class as an orientation and preparation experience for the 3-6 class. Parent/child classes were designed to help parents understand how to meet the needs of their children. Lastly, programs were developed to meet the changing needs of society as more mothers returned to the work force.

There were many different class schedules offered to meet the needs of families. Some programs offered choices of two, three and five day classes. There were half-day as well as full-day programs. Some programs continued year-round; others followed the typical nine month calendar. Some part-time classes shared their environments with naptime programs, as well as before and after school care. Sharing space made it very difficult to prepare and maintain a clean, safe, consistent environment.

Communicating Infant/ Toddler Needs

There was a critical need to communicate to school boards, administrators, parents and teachers that this first plane of development from 0-3 is the most important phase of human development and should be treated with the utmost respect. This is the time when children absorb everything in their environment, which affects the personality and lays the foundation for a secure and emotionally stable adulthood.

Carole Wolf Korngold (left) CMTE/NY and Grazia Honegger, Birth Center of Rome, hosts of the Montessori International Congress, are shown here with Rita Messineo, (right).

The fundamental needs of the infant include unconditional love, physical nourishment, protection from physical and psychological harm, and growth in independence. It is precisely how we meet these needs which makes the difference and affects the infant's identity formation. For these reasons, infants and toddlers need specially educated teachers.

Organizing the First US Teacher Education Program

The AMS Board asked me to organize an infant/toddler seminar to determine ways that we could meet the needs of an increasing number of 18-month to 3-year-olds enrolled in Montessori schools. On the weekend of June 9, 1979, at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio, Montessorians gathered from all over the United States. This seminar validated the interest in this age group and the need for teacher education in the United States.

Later that summer, Dr. Montanaro conducted a one week infant and toddler child development workshop in Tarrytown, New York. Pam and I attended along with approximately forty interested participants. Everyone was excited by the information and the awareness of the needs of the child from 0-3. Everyone echoed the cry for an Infant/Toddler teacher education program in the United States.

Establishing Standards

The AMS Teacher Training Committee appointed a task force to study and establish curriculum and set standards for infant and toddler teacher education and AMS certification. When the standards were accepted and approved by the AMS Board, Carole Korngold and Ceres Schroer York, co-directors of CMTE/NY, asked me to work with Maria Gravel to develop a course.

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Approving the First Course

In November of 1980, the American Montessori Society Teacher Training Committee granted CMTE/NY approval to begin the first Montessori infant/toddler teacher education program in the United States, the second in the world. The first was in Rome, Italy.

That first course started fifteen years ago in June, 1981, with eight students. Currently CMTE/NY trains approximately 35 new infant and toddler teachers each year. Today there are eleven different teacher education centers offering training at this level. These centers are often invited to provide training in other cities or countries, or for programs that do not offer teacher education at this level.

Currently we know of over 500 classes for infants or toddlers, serving over 6,000 children. We know there are many more, but it is difficult to calculate numbers if schools and child care centers are not affiliated with one of the national Montessori organizations.

Model Programs

Montessori infant and toddler classes are sponsored by schools, year round day care centers and various special programs. Infant and toddler child care is provided as an employee benefit by some corporations and hospitals.

CMTE/NY conducts a model child care center located in the Burke Rehabilitation Hospital of White Plains, New York. The Montessori Childrens Center at Burke provides care for the children of the hospital staff members as well as children from the community. Care is provided for infants, toddlers and pre-school age children. The program also serves as an intern site for Montessori teachers.

One of the largest corporate child care centers, located in Cary, North Carolina, is sponsored by the SAS Institute. There a beautiful, modern, state-of-the-art building is specially designed for over 180 infants and toddlers. This center has received many awards for the wonderful services, benefits and the care they provide for the employees and their children.

Other Montessori infant and toddler programs serve Mexican migrant children living in the United States, Native American children living on reservations, and children of homeless families.

There are Montessori infant and toddler classes for children with hearing impairment, victims of child abuse as well as children born with various problems as a result of parent drug and alcohol addiction.

One of the most exciting new Montessori programs serving poor families is Family Star in Denver, Colorado. This program has been chosen as one of the five model Early Start programs in the United States. Early Start is funded by Head Start, a federal program for low income families. Family Star will be able to expand its services when its new building opens in 1997.

Looking to the Future

The continued growth of Montessori infant and toddler care in all segments of American society contradicts the early predictions that Americans would not send their youngest children to schools or child care centers. Indeed, recent statistics gathered by the University of Michigan Center for Social Research show that in 1994, 62% of married mothers with a preschool child were in the work force compared to 30% in 1970.

In 1990, there were 18.6 million preschool children ages 0-4. Of that number, 9.3 million had employed mothers. 10% of the infants and 20% of the toddlers were in center-based programs. Those figures have increased to 14% for infants and 23% for toddlers.

In the United States, 44% of working mothers return to their jobs by the time their infants are six months old. In 1990, just over half (53%) of the mothers with children under one year of age worked outside the home. There is reason to believe that this trend will continue so that the demand for infant and toddler care will increase in the years to come.

• • • • • • • • • • • •

Ginny Varga...

widely recognized as one of the leaders in the field of Infant and Toddler education, founded one of the first Montessori programs in the country at the Gloria Dei School, Dayton, OH following her AMI/AMS pre-primary training in 1961. Ginny has served as the Infant and Toddler Coordinator at the CMTE/NY since 1980, directing courses in New York and Hawaii. Ginny has also been active at the national level as chair of the AMS Teacher's Section (1966-68), as a school consultant (since 1966), Regional Director of Consultation (1971-1973), a member of the AMS Teacher Education Committee and as a member of the AMS Board (1966-1977). For her many achievements, Ginny was chosen as the AMS Scholarship Committee's Living Legacy in 1993-94.

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CHOOSING TO CARE

continued from page 9

Virginia Varga, one of the leaders of infant and toddler education in the country. The student body consisted primarily of professional child care providers, as well as a few parents.

Montessori Approach

The CMTE/NY course demonstrates that the adult influences how the children come to think about themselves and the world-at-large. Our ways of interacting, words, tone of voice, timing and approach to the child affect the child from the moment of birth. We learned how the toys, furniture and equipment we choose for children foster or thwart their emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

The Montessori approach offers concrete tools and techniques as well as a basic philosophy of respecting the young child. These support the development of basic trust and assist the unfolding of the child's emerging personality.

We came to understand the importance of the adult in the child's life because children absorb their attitudes, characteristics, personality traits, speech habits and mannerisms. I gained a new found respect for the people who care for the little ones and developed a deep desire to be that primary person for my daughter, Sarah.

Right Timing

President Clinton has called attention to the need for improved educational opportunities at the high school and college level. He is missing the point. In order to take advantage of higher learning, one needs to have had a nourishing beginning. We know now that emotions are a kind of intelligence. Our emotional capacity is shaped along with our intellect as our brain develops. The first three years affect a child's ability to learn, to concentrate, to feel secure, to have a sense of trust.

Right Actions

As a nation, if we want better students and better citizens, we should shift our emphasis and our resources to offer the maximum, not the minimum, opportunities for today's youngest children. This means empowering mothers and fathers to make the choice to stay home to care for their children themselves if they can. We must help educate parents and care givers to understand and meet the complex needs of the children of this very young age.

This can only happen if we as a society understand the profound value of the work with the little ones, and if parents, nannies, and child care professionals—our infant and toddler specialists—accept the challenge of that work by gaining the knowledge, skills, enthusiasm, and respect for the individual child that makes this work so joyful and gratifying.

"I can't expect my nanny to take as good care of my child as I can," a friend said. We want nannies and child care providers to love our children, although we don't expect them to love our children as much as we do. But, surely, we should expect the adults who do the most important work of our future nation to do it exceptionally well. People who take care of infants should be specialists, as well as loving adults.

Our Challenge

It is my deep hope that this magazine will make this vital information accessible in the marketplace of ideas so that Sarah can live in a society that respects infants and welcomes and supports their presence, value and contribution to our lives by honoring, empowering, and educating the people who care for them.

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Vol. 1, No. 2
Infants and Toddlers

Published 4 times a year.

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Send all address changes and inquires about subscriptions to
Infants and Toddlers
P.O. Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627.

Address all advertising inquiries and editorial correspondence to the editor:
Lillian DeVault Kroenke
PO Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627.
Manuscript and photograph guidelines are available on request.

Printed by
Elante Publishing Services
6201 Peachtree Pl NE
Albuquerque, NM 87111-7502

POSTMASTER:Send address changes to
Infants and Toddlers
PO Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627

Cover Photos
Front: Emily Tracy, age 2 months
Back: Sarah Whaley, crawling

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Editorial

Thank You for Your Support

You have recognized the importance of a formal venue for professional communication and education. Without your enthusiastic response, all our efforts to launch this new service would be fruitless.

Starting any project of this scope requires significant financial and emotional support as well as the cooperation and contribution from many people as we start from ground zero. This is an effort that requires everyone–the author/contributors, the Editorial Advisory Board, the advertisers and, most important of all, you the subscribers who have responded so well.

Reaching Out

With this issue, we are beginning to reach out to Montessori schools across the country to join in this support of our exciting new venture. Schools are always confronted with the need for materials for parent and public education. We are offering schools the opportunity to begin a bulk subscription program at discounted rates.

Purchase and distribution of issues of *Infants and Toddlers* can be win-win for the school, parents who are on the waiting list, parents of children currently enrolled in an infant/toddler program, and even parents with children enrolled in the Early Childhood programs. We look forward to reaching all of you.

Lillian DeVault Kroenke

Ask Ginny...

by Ginny Varga

Q Is it your opinion or has it been stated that a psychological component of hyperactivity is a child searching for a bond?

A I do not want to say that children who have ADD or are hyperactive have had inadequate bonding. I will try to say this very clearly because I would not want to be misquoted. Some behaviors that one might observe from children who have inadequate bonding or attachment look like hyperactive behavior because they have more difficulty focusing in on a task when the basic need for a trusting relationship has not been sufficiently or securely established.

Q What does inadequate bonding affect?

A There are many signs of inadequate bonding. The child is still seeking a trusting relationship with somebody out there. The child spends much of his energy trying to fulfill this need if it wasnít fulfilled at an earlier age. You can see the expression of this need in the childís behavior

As a result, inadequate bonding can affect the child's ability to focus energy on the tasks that are immediately present, like exploring the world or concentrating on some object or activity. It affects learning and the ability to learn.

I would also say that having trust in oneís self and oneís world would not be as strongly formed. Now, that isn't the only thing that affects that trust. All developmental aspects affect trust. But adequate bonding has some affect.

It is important for a child to start with a strong, firm attachment to a primary care-giver. Most often it will be the mother, but we know that there can be other strong attachments as with the father or another primary care-giver.

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

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What Reality Will We Give Them?

By Virginia Varga

The adults in the immediate and extended family are the first to communicate and provide the experiences that will serve as the foundation for the child's perception of reality. Prenatal experiences affect the fetus' early formation of reality. For instance, if the pregnant mother consumes a lot of alcohol, the fetus can feel the effects and begin to incorporate feelings of distress and discomfort.

The Child's First Environment

The brain uses feelings which produce hormones to structure information. All learning is encoded in an emotional nuance. Emotional nuances are blended feelings. These nuances form patterns or categories that are internalized and become a part of our values and belief systems.

When we are cut off from feeling tones, mental connections become difficult. Abstract information is hard to recall because it has no grounding in the emotional nuance records. Feeling and thinking are dependent on one another.

If the pregnant mother takes good care of herself during pregnancy and begins to communicate love and acceptance of her pregnancy, the hormone oxytoxin is produced. This hormone produces pleasurable feelings for the mother and the fetus.

Entering Life's Environment

The next and most important sensations which affects the formation of a perception of reality would be the actual birth experience.

Birth can be extremely positive or negative. I'm sure you can immediately think of many situations in both categories.

Let's take a look at the usual experiences a newborn may have–an environment in which the baby suddenly experiences harsh sensations, loud noises, rough handling, inadequate food and responses to his needs–where there is a lack of tender, loving care and protection.

How overwhelmingly confusing it must be to suddenly be touched by cold, rubber-gloved hands, to hear loud voices and sounds of medical equipment, to have a bright light shining in your eyes, to feel the air rushing into your lungs and the pressure of gravity on your body.

Welcoming A New Life

Now, as a contrast, think about a birth process in which the mother does not need medication and is provided a calm, quiet, trusting environment: where she has been prepared to concentrate, communicate and cooperate with her baby in the birth process. Then mother and her baby are joined again at the breast, skin to skin in a joyous reunion.

Now, mother and baby need to be protected from the invasion of friends and well-wishers for a period of time so the infant can first isolate and experience the many sensations provided by the immediate family, and the unusual and unique sights and sounds of the new environment.

Young children experience all of the same emotions or feelings that we do as adults, although they think very differently. However, in reality, we tend to treat children as though they think logically as adults do and we often discount their feelings.

As a result of this protection and loving environment, the infant can learn that this new, foreign world is an okay place to be. Mother's milk and arms meet the infant's basic needs as the new baby is held and fed.

As the baby's basic needs are met with care, love and respect, the infant continues to form a sense of reality. That sense of reality logically might be that this new world is a pleasurable place to be. "I can trust that the adults will love and care for me. I can also trust myself to communicate my needs effectively. I am competent." Ideally, this reality would be a fact for most of the children in the world.

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WHAT REALITY WILL WE GIVE THEM?

continued from page 5

A Stranger In A Strange Land

The newborn is like an alien from another planet. Everything experienced is new. Children have no names for anything and lack an understanding of the language spoken and the many new sensations. The newborn has only feelings of the event to incorporate.

Remember that the brain uses feelings to structure information. What does this new little, dependent alien need? How can we help the child to adjust to the reality of existence in this world? Experiences begin to affect the child's formation of a sense of reality. A different beginning—a different reality.

In a consistent and orderly environment, the infant begins to develop the ability to organize impressions into predictable patterns, which in turn helps the infant to make sense of this exciting, yet confusing world of new sensations and visual objects. The first sensory images are most important and have an awesome effect.

The child is attracted to human faces. The face of the mother (the caregiver) serves as a mirror for self reflection for the newborn, as well as for the young child. Does the adult's face reflect love and acceptance or does it reflect rejection, anger, fatigue and depression? How does the newborn see itself in the mirrored reflection?

The infant begins to discover self through the responsiveness of others—parents, family, caregivers.

Important Early Decisions

These young children are in sensitive periods for absorbing their environment and making early decisions about their personal realities. That is, who they are, how the world works and what they must do to get attention, to be accepted, to be loved and to survive.

These early decisions are made based primarily on feelings rather than logical thinking. The brain uses feelings to structure information. Feelings underlie everything we know, even when we are not conscious of these feelings. Feelings are the brain's way of coding, classifying and cross-referencing experiences.

Our beliefs about children, what they need, how they should act, what they should learn, how they should feel and what they should eat are most often not based on factual information of a child's needs, or how children develop.

Young children experience all of the same emotions or feeling that we do as adults, although they think very differently. However, in reality we tend to treat children as though they think logically as we do and we often discount their feelings.

Moving Out Into The World

Children come to us in our schools and child care centers with many varied experiences, thus different realities. When children come to us in a Montessori program—infant or toddler—we, too, are in a position of mirroring and communicating to the children a sense of reality as we respond and care for the children, as we provide activities for them. The experiences add to those children internalized in utero, birth and in their family.

How should we assist children in their cosmic task of adapting to their time and culture? What can we give the child to assist in such a great formative task?

After all, don't we as adults have different perceptions of reality? We have all come from different families, different environments, rich and poor, different cultures, and different religions. Thus we have different values and beliefs which add up to different realities.

Our beliefs about children, what they need, how they should act, what they should learn, how they should feel and what they should eat are most often not based on factual information of a child's needs, or how children develop.

Rather they are the result of our personal experiences of having been a child and what our parents and grandparents and teachers taught us directly or indirectly.

When Do You Give Your Attention?

Many of our beliefs and values, which formed our personal reality, were subtly communicated by what our parents and teachers gave attention to. Therefore, in our caring for children, we must be careful what we pay attention to. Attention is a great reinforcer of behavior and the formation of our personal reality.

Do we give the children in our care attention for being curious, for being independent, for showing initiative, for being polite and helpful? Or do we pay more attention to children when they get hurt or are demanding, impolite or screaming?

It is relatively easy to understand that there are many different realities existing at the same time in this very real world. And it is a fact that the only thing we can be sure of is change. That, too, is reality. Today, in our rapidly changing world, adaptation is made more difficult for the young child.

Respect Begins At Birth

Maria Montessori stated that we should treat the newborn with reverence. Right from the beginning, we show respect by telling the infant what we are going to do and what we are doing to or with the child. When we move more slowly, the infant has time to watch, respond, anticipate and participate in their care, in life.

Ginny Varga...

widely recognized as one of the leaders in the field of Infant and Toddler education. She founded one of the first Montessori programs in the country at the Gloria Dei School, Dayton, OH following her AMI/AMS pre-primary training in 1961.

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For her many achievements, Ginny was chosen as the AMS Scholarship Committee's Living Legacy in 1993-94.

It amazes me to know that a newborn infant can squirm toward and find the mother's breast by sensing its odor and warmer body temperature. I am not suggesting that an infant never needs help to find the nipple. What I am pointing out is the competence of a newborn.

Identifying The Real World

Dr. Montessori also directs us to introduce the child to the real world. In a sense, I think the infant and toddler world is closer to reality than the adult world. The very young child lives in the present—here and now. One of the benefits we receive when we work with this age groups is sharing the child's wonderful world.

Giving the child the names of everything in the immediate environment helps the child to understand and further develop a sense of trust. Just think, all of these new experiences must be amazing and fantastic to this new arrival.

A Montessori Reality

Since the adult has control over the child's environment, we must be very selective in what we make available. We should protect the infant and toddler from the world of illusion and fantasy. A young child cannot discriminate between that which is real and that which is not real. This confusion interferes with normal development.

I believe that children's self confidence and competence help them adjust to the reality of a changing world. Therefore, by introducing the infant and toddler to the familiar or real world—the child's world—we assist them in their cosmic task. This is the reality Montessorians should be providing.

Children come to us from many different experiences or realities. If our Montessori reality meshes with the child's, I believe the child will continue to grow in independence and self confidence. This growth, in turn, supports the child in making a healthy, peaceful adaptation to the world.

For the children who come to us having formed a conflicting sense of reality, we can hope that their Montessori experience will give the child another possible reality. Sometime in the child's life, this early experience might make a difference. The child will know that there are alternatives and options.

We must continue to treat all children with respect, acceptance and love. Show them how to do things so they can experience the joy of their developing competence. Give the child the real world of familiar objects in the home and nature. Provide consistent, orderly nurturing environments that will help the child to form a sense of reality that will enable him to become the child of Montessori's dream, *The New Child in a New World*.

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The Home Environment

Birth to 12 Months

By Susan Tracy

Introduction

Parents want to welcome their child into the home. Many pregnant mothers have experienced *nesting*—the drive to prepare the home for the coming baby. Ideally, parents are prepared to accept their new child and meet the infant's needs. The home is for all family members. There will most likely be baby things in every room of the house. The house will never be quite the same again!

A baby's needs are few, but important. Most parents in our affluent society buy too much. By observing babies, Montessori infant and toddler educators have determined simple materials that meet their developmental needs. Following these suggestions will save new parents money.

During pregnancy and the first few month after birth, the mother is the environment. The newborn needs to be held in order to have that familiar warm, surrounded feeling, and to hear the familiar heartbeat of mother. The child's eyes focus on her face.

How do we prepare the environment for the newborn period? By preparing the mother and assuring that she is able to give her attention and energy to her baby. She will need a comfortable, quiet place to sit to nurse the baby.

Diapers and Clothing

Parents will want to arrange a place to change diapers. Ideally, diapers are changed in a bathroom so that the child comes to associate that room with elimination. A changing table is not needed if the adults caring for the baby are comfortable to kneel, changing baby on a pad on the floor. This is much safer than putting a squirming baby on a high changing table.

A baby's skin is adjusting to the air, water, clothing and substances it contacts. Cloth diapers and natural fiber clothing (cotton, wool and silk) are tolerated best. Lotions and powders are usually not needed, but if they are used, they can be from a natural source such as almond oil. Little clothing is needed if the home is warm and the baby gets frequent skin-to-skin contact with the mother and father.

One of the most important activities for the infant's learning requires no material—talking to the baby. And this can begin before the baby is born.

Less clothing also means more freedom of movement. My children crawled a month sooner without a diaper than when wearing a diaper. I recommend some time out of diapers every day. Dresses and long pants can interfere with crawling. Shoes can hinder walking. Often they don't fit properly. Provide soft leather shoes only when needed for warmth and protection.

The Importance of Moving

Freedom of movement allows an infant to develop coordination. Movement develops the pathways of the brain. An infant whose movement is restricted does not develop the brain to its full potential Montanaro (1991).

One way that movement, and thus development, is hindered, is through the use of devices that restrain the infant. Most parents use several of these to contain the infant (car seat, infant seat, play pen, crib) or to give a false ability to move (walker or jumper).

A car seat is necessary, but otherwise the baby is best allowed to move freely.

Many children who have had greater opportunities to move appear more coordinated. They seem more confident in taking on physical tasks. The attitude of the parents affects movement. I regularly observe infants who are new crawlers of seven or eight months looking to a parent for approval before moving ahead.

Infants enter into this world, explore observe, and try to make sense of it.

They look for order in the environment and their routine. As with older children in Montessori, we present the real world to the child at their level of understanding. The infant is learning the pattern of day and night so we do not completely darken the bedroom during the day. We do not play with the baby during the night.

Appropriate Furnishings

Babies may have their own room, or they may share a room with parents or siblings. Newborns enjoy the surrounded feeling that they had in the womb. A basket or bassinet may be preferred for sleeping in the first weeks of life but soon the baby is capable of movement and will need more space.

The ideal bed for the baby is low. It could have a frame or just be a mattress or cotton futon on the floor, no more than eight inches high. Twin size allows more movement than crib size. Babies of three or four months can creep to one end of the bed, and rotate around. They rarely roll out of the bed once rolling is voluntary, but if the floor is hard, a rug or mat can be placed beside the bed.

Parents protest that the baby can get out of a low bed. Yes, and they can get into it, too. Many times my children climbed into bed and fell asleep before I even realized they were tired.

Of course, the room must be safe, but it should be anyway. Parents think of a crib as a safe space, but many children learn to climb out of the crib, sometimes before they can even walk! Better that the safe space is the entire room. The door can be gated or closed when the child sleeps, although I found that my children consistently came to find me upon waking.

Visual stimulation should be minimized in the sleep area. Perhaps there could be a mobile or picture to engage the waking baby, but the bed is best associated with sleep.

When babies are awake, they will want to be with others. Placing the baby on a quilt or mat on the floor in the living area of the home is one of the best ways to encourage movement. A long mirror can be hung or placed horizontally at floor level, so that baby can see his/her whole body moving.

Age-Appropriate Toys

Younger babies enjoy mobiles. These can be homemade. Begin with a simple black and white mobile during the first few months. Then introduce a color mobile. Hanging a bell above a three- or four-month-old motivates movement.

After gaining arm control by batting, the baby can begin to reach out to grasp a wooden ring suspended overhead. For early grasping, rattles should be lightweight and small enough to fit the tiny hand. Because rattles are mouthed, wood with a natural finish or no finish is ideal. Dried gourds make natural rattles.

When the child begins to creep and crawl, a soft ball can motivate movement. When the baby touches the ball, it rolls a short distance, and the baby may follow.

A crawling baby should have access to stable furniture that can be used for pulling up. Once the baby is pulling up well, the baby can push a walking wagon to begin taking steps.

There are several materials that can be used to encourage the infant's fine motor development. The young child will enjoy putting objects in containers and dumping them out again. Simple nesting bowls and a wooden egg in an egg cup can be used successfully at eight to twelve months. Children that age are also challenged by putting rings on a peg and balls in a hole. The most popular material in my Parent-Infant classroom is the ball ramp (a wooden ball rolls down a series of ramps).

The Most Important Activities

One of the most important activities for the infant's learning requires no material—talking to the baby. And this can begin before the baby is born. My wise obstetrician prescribes that both parents talk to their baby throughout pregnancy. This helps them to connect with

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Recent Research Findings

Report on the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research Tells Us About Our Youngest Children

By Carole Wolfe Korngold

Current Research Supports Montessori's Findings

Current research supports what Maria Montessori discovered so many years ago about the significance of the prenatal life and the first three years. What is extremely important to us as Infant and Toddler Specialists is the recognition of the necessity of the careful preparation of the young child's physical and psychological environments.

The White House Conference

Last April, I was invited to the White House to take part in the *White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research Tells Us About Our Youngest Children*, hosted by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Her opening remarks focused on the the rapidly growing brain of the infant and hightlighted the importance of the first three years of life.

As Dr. T. Berry Brazleton said, "It was a wonderful opportunity for those of us involved in child development and health to share our concerns about U.S. families and children."

Early Brain Development

Clinical studies reported that electrical activity in brain cells change the structure of the brain both before and after birth. The same processes drive the explosion of learning which occurs in the new born and throughout those earliest years. The lack of nurturing and proper responses by sensitive and educated caregivers during this period, adversely affects the child's brain development.

Sensitive Periods Recognized

The human brain has a remarkable capacity to change, but timing is crucial. While learning continues throughout the life cycle, there are optimal periods which we in Montessori call *sensitive periods*. The conference called them *prime times*. In the neuro-biological literature, these times are called *critical periods*. The Time article called them *windows of opportunity*. This information supports the recognition of *sensitive periods* as the time in which the brain is particularly efficient at specific types of learning.

The Montessori View Validated

None of these finaings are new to Montessorians. But having supporting scientific research evidence disseminated to the general public enhances our professional credibility. This presents an opportunity for us to interact with the larger infant and toddler community.

A Word of Caution

There was a great deal of emphasis at this conference about the importance of stimulation. We need to remind ourselves about the danger of over stimulation by caregivers and by the environments we create. As we know, there's a big difference between talking with children and filling their lives with chatter and clutter. We see our function as assisting the natural development of our youngest children.

Carole Korngold...

is well known in Montessori circles as the Director of the Center for Montessori Teacher Education/New York (CMTE/NY). Most recently Carole co-hosted the Montessori International Congress in Rome, Italy, in November, 1996. She is a past president of the American Montessori Society

Carole was instrumental founding The Early Leaning Center in Albany, NY, where her children started, and Westchester Day School in Mamaroneck, NY.

Carole holds both AMS Infant/Toddler and Early Childhood certification. She received her Bachelors from Syracuse University and her MEd from Manhattanville College, NYC.

Carole is the mother of two children, Jamie, a rabbinical student, and K.T., writer. She is also the proud grand-mother of K.T.'s daughter, Sarah.

American Montessori Society Fall Regional Seminar, October 24-26, 1997

Mark your calendars. The excitement is building!

The first AMS conference focusing on infants and toddlers will be held at the Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center in St. Louis, MO. What an excellent opportunity for professional development and networking with other infant/toddler educators!

Dr. William Sammons, MD, a noted pediatrician who worked with T. Berry Brazelton, will highlight the conference as the Keynote Speaker. Dr. Sammons will discuss specific strategies to help children gain confidence in their own abilities, emphasizing for parents and teachers what children can do. He will show us how, by sustaining patterns of interaction which enhance self-sufficiency and initiative, parents, teachers and children can learn from each other in a very active interchange which makes life more exciting for everyone.

For the first time, there will be infant/toddler presentations during each session. On Sunday morning there will be a material making workshop at Hope Montessori Infant/Toddler Community.

The comfort and attractiveness of the Conference Center will appeal to the whole family as will the reasonable discounted conference rates. Parking is free and the airport shuttle is only $10.00.

To reserve a room, call 314-532-500. For more conference information, contact Susie Shelton-Dodge at 314-458-4550 or Terri Byrd at 212-358-1250.

Come. Connect. Network with other infant/toddler educators.

Other presenters and topics include:

Tracie Goebel & Melisa Gregory	First Steps to Independence
Patricia M Picchetti, MD	A Journey of Life: Special Needs for a Special Child
Barbara Rueter	Interdependence in a Montessori Infant Community
Lynn Williams	Spiritual Development of the Toddler Teacher
Susan Tracy	First Observe: Meeting the Needs of Children, Birth to 3
Carole Wolfe Korngold	What New Research on the Brain Tells Us
Nancy Birkenmeier	Sleep Issues in the Young Child
Rita Bremmer	Creating a Toddler Reality Through Language

Letters to the Editor

"I'm looking forward to this new magazine. I was in the first infant/toddler program with Ginny Varga and Carole Korngold in New York. Say 'Hi' to both of them for me. I'm now with the Early Intervention & Early Childhood Special Education Program in Douglas County, Oregon working as a Speech-Language Pathologist and using my Montessori background often!"

Karen Nielsen-Frye
Myrtle Creek, OR

"It was great to hear from you. *Infants and Toddlers* is a very informative publication, and badly needed.

I have only two suggestions. One is that you expand your coverage to include more of the AMI perspective... The other is that you look at the mainstream research that complements Montessori. There is currently an explosion of information on the under-three age group... Thanks for sharing your work with me. It's a great start, and I'm sure it will enhance the infant-toddler field."

David Kahn, Executive Director, NAMTA

We agree with your suggestions, David. Please see the article in this issue by Susan Tracy, AMI trained in Denver.

• • • • • • • • • • • •

THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

continued from page 9

their child. In the later months the baby hears their voices.

My second child was born when my first was a toddler, demanding that I read his favorite book at least ten times a day. As a newborn, my daughter would stop crying at the sound of that familiar rhyme.

We try always to tell the baby what we are doing, what they are doing and what the objects are around us. Receptive language comes before expressive. Infants understand much more than they can say.

Books for a baby should be simple, with only one item on a page. Pictures should be realistic, and give the adult something to tell the child. Babies enjoy turning the pages of a board book.

Ending

As educators, we aid the child by educating parents. We can give suggestions for the home.

If we give parents the opportunity to observe their child, they can discover the child's present needs. Parents are sometimes behind in understanding their child's needs. They keep repeating what the baby responded to a few months ago. In order to be responsive to a child, the adult must focus on what the child is trying to do. Only then can we provide the environment for success.

It is the child's success. It is the child's growth. It is the child's life. We prepare the way.

Reading

Understanding The Human Being: The Importance of the First Three Years, by Silvana Quattrocchi Montanaro. 1991, Nienhuis, Mountain View, California.

References

Michael Olaf's Essential Montessori
P O Box 1162
Arcata, CA 95518

Nova Natural Toys and Crafts
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Chestnut Ridge, NY 10977

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coordinates the Infant-Toddler Teacher Preparation course for MECA-Seton. She is school coordinator and direct Parent-Infant and Toddler classes for the Montessori School of Hinsdale, Illinois, one of MECA's lab schools.

Susan holds a Bachelors Degree in psychology from Northwestern University and a Masters Degree in Education from Loyola College in Baltimore. She has Infant and Toddler certificates from both the American Montessori Society and the Association Montessori Internationale.

The mother of three, Susan leads parenting seminars based on the Montessori Method.

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Age-Appropriate Activities and Toys

Compiled By Susan Tracy

Age/Stage	Description	Use	Purpose
Prenatal on	**Music** Recordings of children's and other types of music, music box, singing and later, fingerplays.	Hearing by 7th month of pregnancy. Will recognize a familiar song or poem at birth. Don't just play recordings—sing!	Develops auditory sense and love of music.
From birth	**Door Mirror** Hang horizontally at floor level while baby is creeping and crawling. Hang vertically once walking.	Place in the living area with a quilt to occupy baby near others.	Develops body image.
Birth to ten weeks	**Mobile** At first, black and white or high contrast mobile.	Hang 10-12" above the baby's face, to the preferred side.	Promotes visual development.
From birth	**Shelving** Low enough for the child to reach, preferably wood.	A place to store the child's toys, materials belongings.	Provides order. Accessibility of belongings aids independence.
From 2 or 3 months on	**Color Mobiles** May be made of paper shapes (pinwheels, animal, geometric shapes, etc.). Consider view from below. Moves with air current.	Hang 12" above the baby's preferred side. Observe what the baby is most interested in looking at.	Builds visual perception.
2 to 5 months	**Mobiles for batting** Cloth ball, wood objects, bell.	Hang object within reach.	Motivates arm and hand movement (cause and effect).
3 months until sitting	**Mobile for grasping** Wood ring or shape, cloth shape. Must be easy to grasp.	Hang within reach. Could be hung from elastic so baby can pull object to mouth.	Develops eye-hand coordination, reaching and grasping (cause and effect).
From 3 months on	**Rattles** Made of natural materials (wood, cloth, metal—not plastic). Also, wood rings and shapes.	For the 3- or 4-month-old, choose small, light rattles. Hold near baby's hand. Older babies can pick up a larger rattle.	Helps grasping, mouthing and auditory development.
From 5 months.	**Rolling Toys** Soft balls and rolling rattles.	Place near child on the floor. Should not roll far.	Motivates crawling.
6 months-2 1/2	**Table** (Height 15") and **Chair** (Seat height 7") preferably wood.	Use for meals and work. A chair with sides or arms is helpful until sitting well.	Aids independence in sitting. Provides a place for working and eating.
6 months and up	**Doll** Realistic, anatomically correct.	First, looks at the doll, then holds and carries it. Later, nurtures and dresses it.	Encourages movement and develops body image.

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Age-Appropriate Activities and Toys

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Age/Stage	Description	Use	Purpose
From 5 to 6 months	**Small dishes** Plates, tiny cup without lid, small pitcher, small fork and spoon.	Encourages and models independent use. Give only a little liquid in cup so spills are small.	Develops fine motor skills and independence.
8 months	**Objects in containers** Several small objects in an interesting container (for example, wooden eggs in a basket).	First, dumps or takes objects out. Months later will replace objects.	Introduces concept of in and out.
8 months for 1 ball, 10 to 12 months for several balls	**Box with ball(s)**	Ball(s) is dropped, pushed or hammered into hole(s).	Teaches object permanence (concept that an object exists though out of sight) and fine motor skills (hand movement).
8 months for 2 pieces, 12 months for more	**Nesting objects** Wood egg in an egg cup, nesting blocks, cylinders, or dolls	Observe to see what type and quantity.	Enhances fine motor size discrimination.
From 8 months until walking	**Bar or furniture for pulling up**	Bar may be attached to the wall, or provide stable furniture the baby can pull on.	Exercises gross motor (large muscle) movement and builds independence and self-esteem.
8 months and up	**Balls** Various sizes and textures, of wool, cloth, rubber. Not too hard.	A simple toy to manipulate, throw and chase.	Develops gross motor movement.
8 months and up	**Doors and lids** Some with locks and latches.	Throughout the home, things to open and close. More challenging as they get older.	Builds eye-hand coordination and independence.
8-15 months	**Ring posts** Rings placed on a peg.	As the child gets older, more and smaller rings.	Encourages grasping and eye-hand coordination.
From about 10 months, or when the child is pulling up	**Walking Wagon** Low wooden wagon with a handle for pushing.	Child pulls up on the handle, and walks with the support of the wagon. Use instead of a traditional walker.	Develops independent walking skills.
11 or 12 months and up (read to the child from birth).	**Books** Simple and realistic with or without words. Rhymes.	The child uses books independently in addition to adults reading to child daily.	Promotes the development of language skills and a love of books.

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VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3

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Vol. 1, No. 3
Infants and Toddlers

Published 4 times a year.

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Address all advertising inquiries and editorial correspondence to the editor:
Lillian DeVault Kroenke
PO Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627.
Manuscript and photograph guidelines are available on request.

Printed by
Elanbe Publishing Services
6201 Peachtree Pl NE
Albuquerque, NM 87111-7502
Phone: (505) 291-8022
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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
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Cover Photo
Front: Sarah Whaley, 10 months, standing up in her Radio Flyer

Infants and Toddlers

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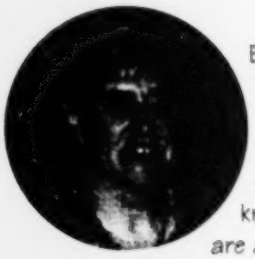
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Editorial

Supporting Professional Growth



Everyone who has been active in Montessori education knows that we are all, to one extent or another, pioneers in an educational revolution. Those of us who have been around from the beginning in the US know the struggles of organizing and staffing new schools, making almost all of the basic classroom materials by hand, working with parent boards, establishing national organizations, determining curriculum and staff for teacher training and much more.

In the forty years since Montessori programs were revived in America, we have come a long way. Efforts have begun to record and archive materials, resources, and individual stories of this growth. There is still much to do.

Many of you reading this know you are very much at the beginning of the expanded growth and interest in the very youngest children which we serve. You may find yourself at the same beginning place as we did for the Early Childhood programs years ago. You are struggling with a minimal income, working hard to sell and build programs and to educate staff and parents to look anew at children.

It will be your job to find ways to raise the standards both for the educational process and for your right to be recognized as professionals providing very special services for a very young and a very important group within our society.

Infants and Toddlers was initiated to provide you support. Our goal is to educate and to archive the young, but rich history of your efforts. *Infants and Toddlers* is here to fill a need. To keep this effort vital, it is imperative that you contribute yet again with your knowledge and your financial support. We must work together for our common interest and our professional future.

Lillian DeVault Kroenke

Ask Ginny...

by Ginny Varga

Q I would like suggestions or maybe a list of the most important points to cover when training a new assistant for the toddler room.

Gayle Davis, Fern Beach, Florida

A **The Main Points to Cover When Training Assistants**

1. Respect for the toddlers rights to:

   a. be spoken to in a quiet respectful, calm, positive manner.

   b. be informed about what the adult is about to do before doing it, i.e., wipe their nose, change their diaper, etc.

   c. participate in their daily routines and develop independence—give just the necessary help, back away and observe.

   d. not be interrupted when concentrating.

   e. chose their own activity and learn through exploration and repetition.

   f. chose not to join in group activities.

   g. not be reported on or talked

continued to page 13

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

Ask Ginny...
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What Makes Infants & Toddlers Tick?

By Sue Kennedy

Watch quietly...

an infant trying to turn over for the first time. Notice his concentration, commitment and struggle to succeed. Undeterred by failure, he tries over and over, finally succeeding. Then what happens? He does it again, time after time, not ready to stop until the skill is under his control. Who makes the infant practice his work unceasingly until it is perfected? There is no outer motivation present. Still the infant strives to accomplish his chosen task.

Follow silently...

and at a reasonable distance—a toddler on a trip of discovery through a park. She stops to smell a flower, turns over a rock, watches a bug make its slow, winding way across the path, walks around a tree four times, goes back to the flower, tries to find the bug and swishes her way through a pile of autumn leaves.

All of this is accomplished not only with an intensity that would do credit to a dedicated scientist, but also a great deal of joy, delight and an evident sense of wonder at what she is experiencing. Why is this person drawn to explore the world so intently that she doesn't even seem to realize you are there?

The expressions of joy and delight, the accompanying sense of wonder, as well as what appears to be an intense feeling of satisfaction, can be observed at all the infant and toddler stages. We see this from the baby who first realizes that her smile has attracted the loving attention and response of an important person in her life to the almost 3-year-old who takes great delight in his burgeoning mobility, excellent grasp of the language and ever-growing communication skills

This Wonderful World of Infants and Toddlers

This is the wonderful world of infants and toddlers. In the period of the unconscious absorbent mind that Montessori described, these fascinating people from birth to three dwell in a different world. This is the time when children learn without seeming to learn.

A parent who responds to the smile of a three-month-old...often see in return big smiles and excited body movements. What the parent may not realize is that this activity promotes activity in the brain.

When they are awake, they are learning. We were there once, but we left that period so long ago that it is no longer in our conscious memory. We learn because we choose to learn, but infants and toddlers learn simply because they exist and every moment of their existence involves learning.

How do they learn to move, to walk, to talk, to think? In short, *how do they do what they do?* They do it without an apparent teacher, but with an intensity rarely matched by those no longer in that period of the unconscious absorbent mind.

Searching For Answers

How do we get into that unconscious absorbent mind to know how these small children are thinking? These are questions that are currently occupying the energies of scientific researchers. And while many answers are to be found in scientific studies, this is not the only way to answer the very basic questions of who these fascinating people really are. Many answers are to be found in the infants and toddlers themselves.

Maria Montessori's words from almost 100 years ago are still the best guide that we have, "Follow the child." Observing and studying diligently, trying to see the world as the child does, will help us probe the world of the very young child and begin to see the world as the child sees it. We are learning more about the levels of understanding with which the infant or toddler tries to make sense of the world. If we can approximate what the process is like for them, it may lead us to better comprehension.

We need to understand why they feel compelled to explore and investigate, to repeat a task over and over, to want the same book or the same song over and over. We know that this is what they want, but we need to understand how and why.

The Great Mystery

The inner growth of the child is a great mystery—one we may never solve. However, we have been making extensive progress in recent years. Many new studies reported in recent issues of *Time* and *Newsweek*

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WHAT MAKES INFANTS & TODDLERS TICK?

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as well as the many magazines for parents of very young children, continue to reveal more facts about how the brain develops after birth.

We now understand more about the significant effect that an enriched environment—or the lack of it—has on this early, most critical stage of development. This knowledge alone should be enough to inspire everyone concerned with children to sit up and take notice of how parents and child care providers alike are—or are not—doing their job.

> We don't notice the development that is taking place in the youngest infant when the environment meets the needs of the developing brain.

We must take responsibility to communicate what we know. We want waves of people knocking down our doors to learn about development from birth to three. We want parents and care givers to be excited about learning how to set up appropriate environments. We want great numbers of businesses willing to spend what is necessary to set up and staff proper child care environments. And we certainly want to see people in government at every level accurately informed and supportive of these efforts.

Emotion As The Motivating Factor

A new book, *The Growth of the Mind and the Endangered Origins of Intelligence* by Dr. Stanley Greenspan, presents, in a forceful but understandable way, a new concept for us to contemplate. It is his firm belief that emotion is the motivating factor in the actual physical development of the mind. Dr. Greenspan proposes that emotion enables the brain to form thought. Emotional interaction with a caring and loving adult encourages brain connections to grow and allows all the wonderful capabilities present at birth to begin their marvelous development.

A parent who responds to the smile of a three-month-old with appropriate comments like, "What a beautiful smile. What is it you would like to tell me? I'd really like to know," often see in return big smiles and excited body movements. What the parent may not realize is that this interaction also promotes activity in the brain. Connections are being stimulated to form among billions of brain cells and neurons. These connections are the links the brain uses to communicate with other parts of the brain and the body.

Without these connections we, very simply, do not function to our full potential as mentally adept human beings. The stimulating interaction provided by a positive emotional environment and an appropriately prepared physical environment do much to ensure the maximum development of the brain.

The Prepared Emotional And Physical Environment

Montessori writes eloquently about the prepared emotional and physical environment as it regards the sensitive period for language. "The child manifests the pleasure that he receives when he contracts his limbs, clenches his fists, lifts up his head and turns toward one who is speaking and fixes his eyes intently upon his lips. The child is passing through a sensitive period. . . All this happens quietly and unnoticed as long as the child's environment

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Moving At A Child's Pace

By Lillian DeVault Kroenke

The interests and motivations of the adult are very different from those of the young child. Adults want to get somewhere in their time frame and then move on. Because everything is new and exciting, the young children want to explore, to find out what is there and all about it. They have no concern with time.

The majority of family activities are organized around the needs of the adult. We have all seen young children pushed in strollers, pushed about in grocery carts, pulled in wagons, and in specially designed seats or trailers behind a bicycle. All this movement is either for the adult's own exercise or for the adult to accomplish something efficiently and without boredom. For the infant and the toddler, most of the world just whizzes by.

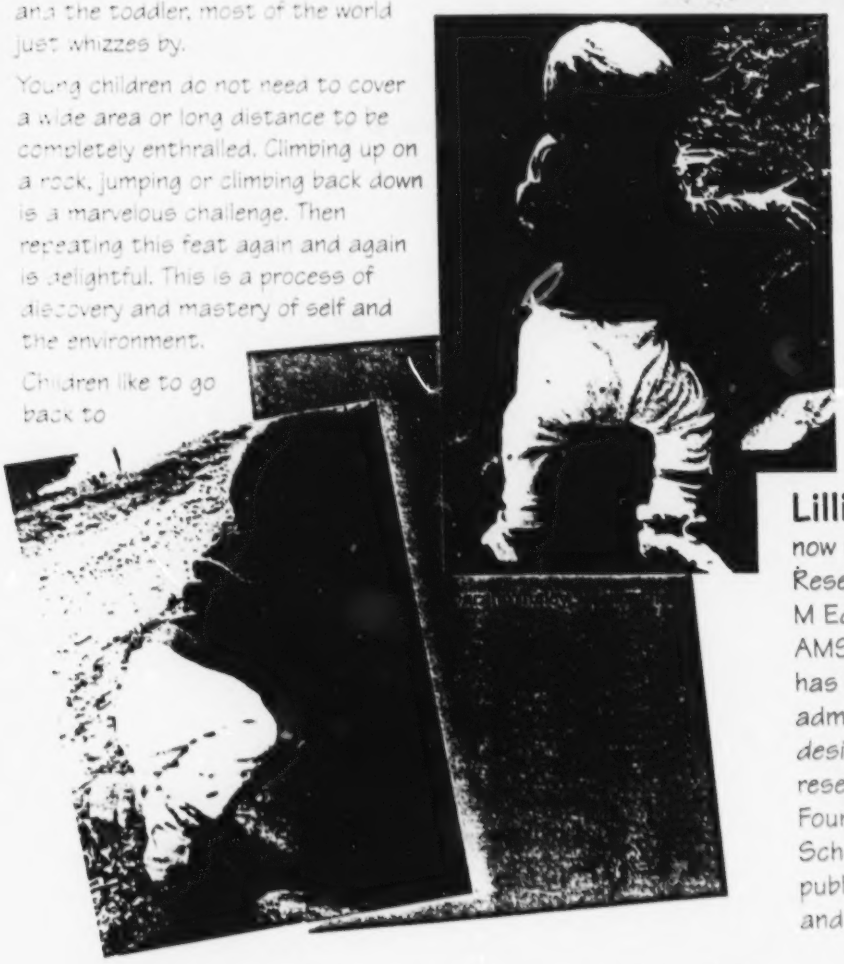
Young children do not need to cover a wide area or long distance to be completely enthralled. Climbing up on a rock, jumping or climbing back down is a marvelous challenge. Then repeating this feat again and again is delightful. This is a process of discovery and mastery of self and the environment.

Children like to go back to familiar places and do the same familiar things. Most adults who have already mastered skills, are anxious to move on or require their child to do something that peaks their adult interest.

For adults, following the child's interests, can be very relaxing and rewarding as they learn to focus on the uniqueness of their child. This is a great way to learn to enjoy and respond to the interests and the mysteries of the life of their child. Children help us see the everyday and the ordinary in refreshing new ways.

A walk in the park, in a woods, along a creek bed, or at the zoo can be pure delight for both the adult and child—if you move at the child's pace. No need to cover the entire park or woods or creek bed or see all the animal in the zoo. Just give your child your full attention and enjoy the experience, knowing that, as the child grows, you will cover more. Be comforted that there is important and appropriate learning going on for everyone.

The Hope Montessori Infant and Toddler Community in Creve Coeur, MO, under the direction of David Shelton-Dodge, is fortunate to have access to a 75-acre campus. A signature activity for this program year-round is a daily walk in the surrounding woods, fields and school grounds. Turn the page and join us for the walk.



Lillian DeVault Kroenke, now retired from BFGoodrich Corporate Research, has a BA from Kent State, an M Ed from Case Western Reserve and AMS Certification for 3 to 6 in 1963. She has been a Montessori directress, school administrator, teacher trainer, owner of *designed for children*, language curriculum researcher for the Montessori Divelopment Foundation and director of the AMS School Consultation Service. Today she is publishing The Montessori Readers Series and is the editor of *Infants and Toddlers*.

Into The Woods

a picture story

By Lillian DeVault Kroenke

A walk in the woods begins by climbing down a small hill. Children may slide down or walk carefully when they are ready—always supervised by the staff.

Sliding down the hill means it's okay to get a little dirty outside. Clothes can be changed when they return to the classroom.

Here the children stop by the b bushes to pick a treat.

Throughout the walk, children stop to collect leaves, nuts, stones and to observe insects and animals.

One more challenge! Adults help the children cross the small ditch near a farmer's field.

The chi outdoo to hop great

Photographs by Lillian DeVault Kroenke were taken of David Shelton-Dodge's class at The Hope Montessori Infant and Toddler Community in Creve Coeur, MO.

4

This bridge was made by the **parents.** When they are **ready,** the children may **choose to** walk across the **bridge alone.** Or they may **walk across** hand-in-hand **with an adult.**

kberry

5

The group stops to rest and wait for all the children to catch up before moving on.

6

All the children cross this narrow bridge with an adult.

n love to climb this long staircase. Learning how r these wide stairs is

10

Once a little girl turned around and walked up this hill backward. Others followed and a new tradition began.

This wide curb makes a wonderful balance beam on the way back to the classroom.

11

9

A Mother's Story

Pt 2: The Incredible Drive Toward Movement

By K.T. Korngold

An Explosion of Activity

It is the beginning of September and Sarah's first birthday will be on the 14th. She is experiencing a tremendous explosion of activity, propelled by an incredible inner drive toward movement. After weeks of practice—balancing, shifting weight, standing, squatting, raising each leg in an arabesque, cruising along the sofa edge, from table to chair to stool, carefully traveling up and down the step, she took three steps independently.

It is such a miracle how far the baby comes in only twelve months. How strong their urge for movement. How driven they are to get upright and go! How diligent they are in their practice! How they persevere—even in sleep. And how they are rewarded for their efforts!

I love to sit a small distance away and observe Sarah as she goes about the exploration of her own movement. At times she looks like a surfer riding the waves; at others, like a modern dancer; or she is a yogi practicing her postures. Her movement is careful and elegant, inspired and delightful. Occasionally she turns her head down, and gets into a triangle—the yoga plow position—with her hands and feet on the floor and her bottom in the air. "Sarah is upside down!" I say, and she smiles. I am amazed how infants just naturally know what to do—giving the brain that little extra dose of oxygen whenever it needs it.

Natural Movement

Sarah is so eager to move. It seems unnatural to contain her! Now she has a hard time sitting down for her meals at her low table. "We are sitting down," I tell her, calmly, slowly, and guide her to the little chair. She sits down and tries to be patient. Then she springs up once again, ready for action. The meal goes on like this until she gets the hang of it, becomes focused on her eating, and sits. She brings the spoon to her mouth and eats, spoonful after messy spoonful. She is a master drinking from the glass cup. When she wants more she holds the small glass out to me to refill her juice, water or milk.

Movement is Essential

One of the foundations of the Montessori philosophy is the idea that movement is essential to physical and mental development, and an aid in maximizing the child's potential. Therefore, Montessori infants and toddlers are given as many opportunities for self-motivated movement as possible, within an environment that is specifically designed to accommodate them, safely.

This philosophy is contrary to what happens to most children of this age, who are usually contained rather than free to move. From crib to playpen, electric swing to walker, car seat to high chair, the children are confined, constrained and limited. Often, when they are given environments that are designed to encourage their motor development (for example, gymnastic classes), the children are put on the equipment or placed into positions. Rather than follow the interest, attraction, and focus of the child, it is the instructor or curriculum that determines the exercise.

But what children during this period truly need is the freedom, time and space to exercise their muscles, experiment with their balance, and discover the boundaries and edges of their own bodies. They progress from turning over, to crawling, to pulling up, to stepping, to walking at their own pace and in their own sequence, without the interference of devices that will put them in positions before they are ready.

I am trying to give Sarah as much freedom of movement as possible. We live in a small apartment in New York City, so this means going to the park. Sarah knows the ritual of getting ready to go, and is eager to participate. She has a small chair in the front hall, beside a low nook where we hang her coat on a hanger. Before we leave, she sits in the chair where, together, we put on her socks and shoes.

Supporting Independence

Dr. Montessori noticed that children tend always to expand their independence, wanting to act of their own accord, to handle things, to dress and undress themselves. At this stage, Sarah is more accomplished at the undressing—the ability to undress comes before dressing. To take off her shoes, I start the lace and then she pulls it the rest of the way; I free the shoe and she pulls it off her foot; I edge the sock over her heel and she yanks it off from the toe. At each step of the way, I include her. This takes time and patience, but usually, I am not in a rush. Before you know it, she will be putting on her shoes and saying "I did it myself!"

My husband loves to see her coat hanging low to the ground, with her shoes neatly tucked beneath the chair. Her own little mud room, he says. Because Sarah's shoes have their own special place, we will always know where to find them—no searching under the bed or in the back of the closet. She'll know too.

Exploring the World

Off we go in the stroller to the park. Once there, I take Sarah out of the stroller and let her move. As soon as Sarah was able to crawl, I let her go where she wanted—as long as she was not in danger. It seemed she preferred the pavement to the grass, so I gave up redirecting her to the green, and let her follow the snaking curves of the path through the park. We go at her speed, with me walking beside her, pushing the stroller. The path weaves through the park, up and down, with rough spots, pot holes, a variety of textures and experiences. She crawls and scuttles along, exploring each surface.

She is, of course, attracted to stairs. So up we go. I taught her how to turn around and go down backwards. Now when she gets to the top, she pauses. "Turn around, please" I say. And she does. Then down she goes. She pauses, looks around, and starts up again. You can see her confidence grow as she becomes adept with her own movement.

When she began to stand and take her steps, we introduced the Radio Flyer wagon. At first, when she pushed, it zoomed out from under her. But after a short while, she began to understand how to regulate the speed herself. She gained control of her own force and was able to calibrate it with her steps.

Soon she discovered she could step into the wagon and sit inside it. Then with great joy, she found she could stand up inside the wagon and extend her leg up and over the edge, and then get out again. Over and over she practiced this maneuver with great determination. How proud she looked then, being able to get in and out with ease.

In the playground, she loves her Fisher Price pusher. The cart is lightweight plastic and collapses, so it is easy for us to bring along. She races around the pavement in a flurry of speed and excitement—thrilled to be on her own, under her own power and volition. Around and around the loop she goes. She is not trying to get anywhere in particular, but is impelled instead by the sheer thrill of her own movement, the need of her muscles to perfect their task, the drive of her little legs to do this huge and important work of walking.

Then, suddenly, she stops, drops to her knees, and crawls to a flower bed, where she leans over and puts her nose in the yellow mums. She is stopping to smell the flowers. I am awed by how much she sees and takes in of the world around her.

Snack Break

Like most of us, Sarah feels better when she is well rested and well fed. So I am sure to pack a few treats for an afternoon snack—usually fresh fruit, organic cheese, and a bagel or rice cakes. Her hands are usually filthy by this time, so we give a good washing with the diaper wipes. Sarah helps by pulling the wipes out one at a time and handing them to me. "Thank you," I say to her. And then, as needed, "May I have another one, please?" When we are finished, I ask her to close the lid of the box, and she does.

Sometimes she likes to open and shut the box for a while, which I let her do. We aren't in any hurry, after all this is her work – learning about how things operate. Like other children, sometimes she repeats things over and over. I allow her that and don't interrupt her cycle. She is an explorer in a new world, learning how everything is done. I wait for her to let me know she is finished, rather than imposing my will on her that it is enough already.

If the fruit is an orange or a banana, we peel it together. I start the peel on a small section, and then Sarah pulls it off, and drops it in a napkin I have set out. It takes a long time to get through the whole fruit. I start a little peel, and she tugs it off and then drops it on the napkin. Slowly, we work our way. The action is

THE INCREDIBLE DRIVE TOWARD MOVEMENT

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fulfilling for her. It is repeated. It is predictable. The peel makes a satisfying plop as it lands on the napkin.

Finally we are finished with our peeling activity and then, what comes next? We can eat the fruit of our labor. I cut the fruit into small sections. I spear a piece with the fork and hand it to Sarah. She takes the fork from my hand and places the fruit in her mouth. "Delicious!" I say. She gives the fork back to me. "Thank you," I say to her as I take the fork and then offer another. Sarah learned to eat with a fork even before she ate with a spoon. The fork is easier to hold and to control, and the food stays on the tines. Now I just have to work with her to help her learn that we sit when we eat!

Positive Directions

I am careful how I speak with Sarah. She is absorbing everything and learning the language. You can hear in the modulations of her sounds that she is emulating my vocalizations. I try to model grace and courtesy as much as possible. I say "Thank you," when she hands me something. I say "Please," when I ask her something.

And I am very careful to use no sparingly. There are other ways to stop or alter behavior and teach her. I save no for the biggies—not touching the stove or running into the street. I use other words instead to redirect and instruct her. "Chairs are for sitting," I say when she stands on her chair. Or, "Pebbles are for holding," when she puts a small pebble in her mouth. Positive phrasing supports the child's experimentation. I try to make sure that most of what I say to her is pleasant, loving and affirming.

If, at the end of each day, I were to make a chart of all my statements and tones of voice, I would want my positives to far, far outweigh the negatives. I like to tell her how much fun I am having with her today, how much I enjoy being with her, and often, I say, "I like the way you think." Of course, I say "I love you," too!

Expanding Language Skills

Sometimes, in the stroller, when she seems attracted to something, I say, "What do you see?" Then she points, and I say, "Oh, that's a tree," or "That's a truck," or "Do you see the cat?" Lately she has discovered she can put her finger in her nostril. "Nose" I tell her, or, "Have you found your nose?" "Where is Mommy's nose?" I ask, and she gives mine a little tug.

Sarah loves to do "so big!" Now, whenever I say the word "so" she lifts her hands up. Sometimes, seemingly for no reason, her hands shoot up over her head. She smiles her big two-tooth grin, and then I realize I just said, "She was so happy to see us", or "It was so cold at the house." She is listening, listening, listening.

Of course, she knows how to clap. She claps to the songs *Clap hands, clap hands, till Mommy comes home* and *Clap, Clap, Clap your hands, Clap your hands together.* She claps when you say, "Can you clap your hands, please?" She claps when she is happy. She claps when she hears applause on the radio. Yesterday, coming home from the park, we heard the clip clopping of a horse and carriage. Sarah started clapping. I hadn't realized the two sounds are are so similar.

Mind and Body Working Together

Dr. Montessori recognized that mental and physical development are dependent on movement. I can readily see how one helps the other. Sarah's body moves and her thinking grows. Her thought process connects two things and her body expresses it. As her mother, I am trying to provide her with as many opportunities as possible to explore and discover, to practice and exercise, to stretch and reach, to move and move forward, to grow and develop. I am humbly stepping aside and watching her, so that she is still safe—but free—and I, too, am clapping my hands.

K.T. Korngold lives... in New York City, with her husband, Michael Whaley. Their daughter, Sarah Korngold Whaley, was born September 14, 1996. K.T. received her BA in 1985 from Wesleyan University, where she majored in English. She received her Masters Degree from Columbia University Writing Division in 1990. In 1995, she attended the Center for Montessori Teacher Education/NY Infant and Toddler Program. K.T. has published articles about infants and toddlers in *Montessori Life* magazine. She wrote this article at home in the afternoons, while Sarah napped.

ASK GINNY...

continued from page 4

about negatively when present.

h. be self-motivated. Toddlers are not dependent on praise.

2. The importance of forming the habit of daily observation:

a. of oneself.

b. of the head teacher.

c. of the children.

Suggestion: Have a clipboard with a pencil attached in the classroom with a posted observation schedule.

3. The positive impact of a well prepared, safe, ordered and maintained environment on the toddler's absorbent mind.

4. The importance of

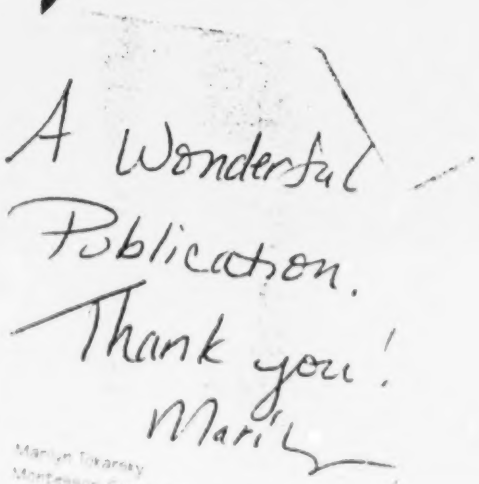
a. positioning yourself at the child's eye level when communicating with the child.

b. positioning yourself so that you can always visually scan the room to be aware of the safety of all the children.

c. confidentiality and responding in a professional manner when interacting with children, staff and parents.

d. regular attendance, punctuality, and consistent responses to the child.

Letters to the Editor



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WHAT MAKES INFANTS & TODDLERS TICK?

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adequately corresponds to his inner needs. In the acquirement of speech, for example, a child's sensitive period remains unnoticed since he is surrounded by people who through their speech provide the necessary elements for his development." (Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*, pg. 43).

In short, we don't notice the development that is taking place in the youngest infant when the environment meets the needs of the developing brain.

Maximizing Early Development

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, with his Neonatal Assessment Scale, seeks to identify more opportunities for adults to become emotionally involved with infants. In his Assessment Scale, he lists aspects of development that are easy for parents to observe and offer opportunities for more interaction. Studies on massage for infants also stress the value of the adult-child interaction that the process provides, for both child and adult.

Guiding parents about the development of their child is an important role for the infant and toddler child care provider. Pointing out what parents may not know or be aware of promotes more involvement. As Greenspan states, positive emotional involvement is the key to the development of the brain. Without adequate early development, language, thinking and reasoning will never reach the levels of the child's potential at birth.

Research scientists caution us, however, not to misread the findings. These facts do not mean that infants can learn to read and compute, but that all this new knowledge can make our interaction more exciting as we know more and more about what is going on, what to look for, and how we can help make it happen.

A Tall Order For Adults

Whether we are working with infants and toddlers directly or training child care providers, we must be aware of the importance of our task. What happens before age three sets the patterns for the years to come. What happens at this early age will determine to a large extent the character of the adult who will emerge in the next century. Children can become loving, caring, responsible, and productive adults or they can become adults who barge through life, caring only for themselves and their own needs.

Yes, it sounds like a tall order, but the child's future development is really what is at stake. It is how we meet the challenge now that is the critical action. We must become advocates for our youngest citizens. They do not vote, have jobs, run corporations, make laws or keep us well and safe, but they will, and much sooner than we realize.

The quality of people our children will become as adults will depend upon the quality of their intellectual capabilities which are, for the most part, determined by the quality of their physical and emotional environment between birth and age three. It will also depend on the quality of their empathic capabilities which are, for the most part, determined by the quality of their emotional and interactive environment during this period.

New knowledge about how the brain develops in the early years makes it easier to understand why children do the things they do and when they do them. We can't see all that is happening so rapidly in the child's body. But we do see a baby who works and works to roll over, the toddler with a vibrant sense of wonder running through the autumn leaves and the child who wakes with joy and delight to a brand new world every morning.

In light of the new studies about the child from birth to three, Montessori's words take a deeper meaning as we stand in awe of the creation before us. Her admonitions to *follow the child, prepare the environment,* and be an *assistant to life* are more significant than ever.

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Vol. 1, No. 4
Infants and Toddlers

Published 4 times a year.

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Send all address changes and inquires about subscriptions to
Infants and Toddlers
P.O. Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627.

Address all advertising inquiries and editorial correspondence to the editor:
Lillian DeVault Kroenke
PO Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627.
Manuscript and photograph guidelines are available on request.

Printed by
Elanbe Publishing Services
6201 Peachtree Pl NE
Albuquerque, NM 87111-7502
Phone: (505) 291-8022
Fax: (505) 291-1252

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
Infants and Toddlers
PO Box 14627
Albuquerque, NM 87191-4627

Front Cover Photo
Quin Anderson, sits supported by a cushion

Back Cover Photo
Sarah Whaley, crawling to reach an object

Infants and Toddlers

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Rita Messineo
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Editorial
Practical Matters

Ah, yes—the classical dilemma for the teacher and the parent—what should we **specifically do** daily in the real world of living with the young child. I have discussed this very issue with some of our Advisory Board members.

It is our intent to build a broad-based view of the child which does include the how and what to do in child care. We have published a list of age-appropriate activities and toys in Vol 1, No 2; a picture story of an outdoor activity—a daily walk in the woods in Vol 1 No 3; and we have included ideas on journaling a child's daily progress in this issue. This month's feature presents clear guidelines for practical activities.

This publication, however, is not intended to focus solely on activities that one would find in a teacher's syllabus. Nor do we wish to encourage a proliferation of duplicate activities which ends up promoting busy work.

On the other hand, there are toys and activities which are very developmentally appropriate for this age group. Teachers should know what is appropriate, what is available, what to look for when selecting materials as well as how to construct safe materials.

We hope to formulate an outline of our approach to this aspect of assistance to young children in one of the up-coming issues and then, of course, to encourage your contributions.

Lillian DeVault Kroenke

Letters
to the Editor

We love your magazine!

Charles M Uzzell
Cary Montessori School
Cary, NC

Thanks for a great publication!
Barbara Chattin-McNichols
West Campus Children's Ctr
Seattle, WA

Please send all the back issues...they are great!
Linda Baggish
Greensboro, NC

A suggestion—it (the journal) needs more practical articles...
Rita Zimny
Countryside Montessori
St. Louis, MO

Please see the editorial on this page

Ask Ginny...

by Ginny Varga

What is the difference between what Montessorians do with infants and infant stimulation?

Charles M. Uzzell, Cary, NC

Infant stimulation generally refers to adult-initiated techniques which provide direct sensory stimulation. Most often, infant stimulation is used as physical therapy or remediation for infants who have special needs, or who have been environmentally deprived of sensory experiences.

Montessorians recognize that each child, depending on temperament, heredity and neurological maturation, has a different threshold for sensory stimulation. Montessori suggested creating environments that are rich in sensory experiences and which provide for the maximum possibility of moving about to explore textures, sights, and sounds. Montessorians are observant of the child's needs and interests. They then create environments which permit the children to initiate activity which fulfill their own sensory needs.

For future issues, please direct your questions to:

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First Steps Toward Independence

By Tracie Goebel and Melisa Gregory

We prepared for this article by researching the word independent. We came across these definitions: free from influence, control, or determination of another or others, and relying on one's own abilities. If you think about it, independence begins at birth, when newborns learn to breathe on their own. Independence is a process that continues from that moment throughout life in many different aspects.

In our program, we provide opportunities to help infants gain independence skills as opportunities naturally arise. We share with you here the way we assist infants as they develop their independence skills.

Working With Parents

In order to provide a supportive environment which meets each child's individual needs, we first need to establish a good working relationship between the parents and the staff. Before a child begins our program, the Montessori educator goes to the new family's house for what we call a home visit. This home visit provides an opportunity to go over program policies, administer any necessary paperwork, and most importantly—to start building a relationship of trust with the family.

When a child enters our program, we require a parent to spend the first day with the child so the child, parent, and staff can become comfortable with one another. Knowing that their mom or dad is comfortable in this environment also helps the child trust. We usually suggest a shorter first day to ensure that it's a positive experience. We spend much of our time observing the parent's interaction with the child. This tells us a lot about the child's daily care.

We keep a personal journal for each child. We write anecdotes about what we see the child doing and we add pictures. This helps parents feel more connected to their children's activities when they have to be away from them. We encourage parents to take these journals home to read and add to them. This interaction about their child helps us develop a relationship with the parents and provides another form of two-way communication. When a child leaves the infant program, the journal is kept by the parents.

Tracie helps a child wave bye to mom.

Separating Successfully

We encourage independence throughout the day with one exception—during separation. Children can only separate successfully in an environment where they feel secure and comfortable. Therefore, we strongly feel that an adult must be available whenever needed to assist a child who is having a hard time. The adult offers assistance by acknowledging how the child feels and offering comfort and support.

We encourage parents to stay for as long as they want any morning. However, when they are ready to leave, they need to say good-bye and leave. We encourage the staff to take the children to the windows so they can see that their parents are actually leaving. When helping children separate, we encourage parents not to use food to help with separation. This can make things more difficult in the long run.

Feeding Infants–From Fluids to Solid Foods

Our program strongly encourages mothers to breastfeed and we offer appropriate assistance to assure their success. Some mothers come in during their lunch hour to breastfeed while many others express milk for use when they are unable to be present.

We feed the babies when they are hungry. We never require them to wait until it is time for them to eat. We never force children to eat at a certain time nor do we wake them

continued to page 6

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

continued from page 5

in order to feed them. We believe that children's bodies tell them when they need to eat and we respond to their needs.

We insist that infants are held when they get a bottle. We never expect infants to hold their own bottle. Holding a child when giving a bottle is very important for several reasons. It allows the perfect opportunity for one-on-one time in group care and makes basic care more personal. The staff members, as well as the children, need special holding time.

We work closely with parents when we introduce cereal and jar foods. We never put cereal in bottles. We feel it is important that children get practice with a spoon. We start feeding children in a bouncy seat before they are able to sit up. When children are able to sit unsupported for short periods of time, they sit at a weaning table during meals. We make sure that utensils are always available for them to experiment with, even if they end up on the floor. An adult is always sitting near the infant at the table. When children are ready for more textured food, we puree vegetables and fruits to offer them. As the infants progress, we give solid, bite-size pieces of food so they can feed themselves.

Quin is fed in a bouncy chair

Taking in Fluids–From Breast Feeding to the Cup

We prefer to wean a child from a bottle gradually. This makes the transition as easy as possible for the child. When the child starts sitting at our weaning tables for meals, we start the weaning process by offering fluids from a cup. Although this is usually a long process, children benefit from experiencing what it's like to drink from a cup.

When we first offer a cup, we hold the cup and let a little fluid flow into the child's mouth. Many times infants just smack their lips together and the fluid trickles out. If we are consistent in offering fluids, the child learns this new way of taking in fluids.

Morgan, at 12 months, drinks from a cup.

After much practice, children drink more and more from the cup and eventually try holding it. Keep in mind that there will be many spills at first. It's best to put only a small amount of liquid in the child's cup at first.

When children seem to be drinking fluids from a cup on their own, we start weaning them from the bottle. If a child still wants a bottle, we start by taking the child to the table. We offer as much of the fluid as possible from a cup. Then we offer the rest from the bottle. The child will eventually take more and more from the cup, making it easier to eliminate the bottle.

Feeding Melanie at the weaning table.

Helping Parents with the Weaning Process

Approaching parents about giving up the bottle can be a very touchy subject. Some parents are just not ready to make this transition and, therefore, are very defensive.

Some parents also have a hard time sharing decisions regarding their child with their Montessori educator. The way we approach parents seems to work well in our program. We never just say, "We're taking the bottle away." We approach the parents when we have had success. We write on the child's daily charts the quantity of fluids the child is drinking from a cup at meals.

When we can show the parents that their child is receiving a lot of fluids from the cup and not very much from the bottle, parents usually show less resistance. We always work on changes before approaching parents so we can see how the child is going to do and so the parents can see that their child might really be ready for this transition. Videos also help us discuss these issues with parents.

The Sucking Instinct and Pacifiers

Self-calming works hand-in-hand with weaning a child. Children can be weaned from a bottle or a pacifier when they have learned some self-calming skills. Often when infants cry, adults respond by plugging them up with a pacifier. Infants under 3 months may need non-nutritive sucking. After about 3 months, a child no longer has a need for sucking.

We offer a pacifier when it is needed. We do, however, use good judgment on when and how to use the pacifier. We do not give children a pacifier just because they are crying. We find a time to meet this need when the child is awake, happy, and just needing to suck.

When the pacifier is given for crying, it's purpose changes. It then becomes a plug and does not meet the sucking need. If a child entering our program is older, we talk to the parents about not giving the child a pacifier. They can bring in a pacifier and leave it in their child's cubby so it is nearby if needed.

When infants are small and unable to control their own bodies, they may need adult help. As they gain more control, we need to allow them the freedom to do more for themselves.

We try not to give children a pacifier so that they never associate it with our program. If a child is using a pacifier before entering our program, our goal is to wean the child from it. We work closely with the child towards achieving this goal. Only then do we talk to the parents about what we are doing and the success we've had. This helps the parents feel more comfortable and less likely to become defensive. This process has been very successful in our program. We currently have no children using pacifiers.

Self-Calming Skills

Infants cry for a number of reasons including hunger, tiredness, frustration and anger. Crying is the way an infant communicates. Many times when adults hear a child cry, they immediately rush over to see what they can do to get the child to stop crying. However, infants do not always need an adult to intervene for them when they are crying. An infant needs to learn self-calming.

It is important that, as caregivers, we understand why the child is crying. We approach the situation through observation. Does the child need something? Is the child angry or frustrated? We then decide what is the appropriate response. An infant may need adults to give reassurance with their voice, to be moved into a different position, or to just be left alone and observed for a while longer. When infants are small and unable to control their own bodies, they may need adult help. As they gain more control, we need to allow them the freedom to do more for themselves.

When an adult's presence is needed, the adult does not necessarily need to touch or hold the child. There are times when a child just needs someone near them as they work through their struggle. When we allow children the time to work through these struggles on their own, they begin to become more independent. An infant needs to be able to self-calm before moving to the toddler program.

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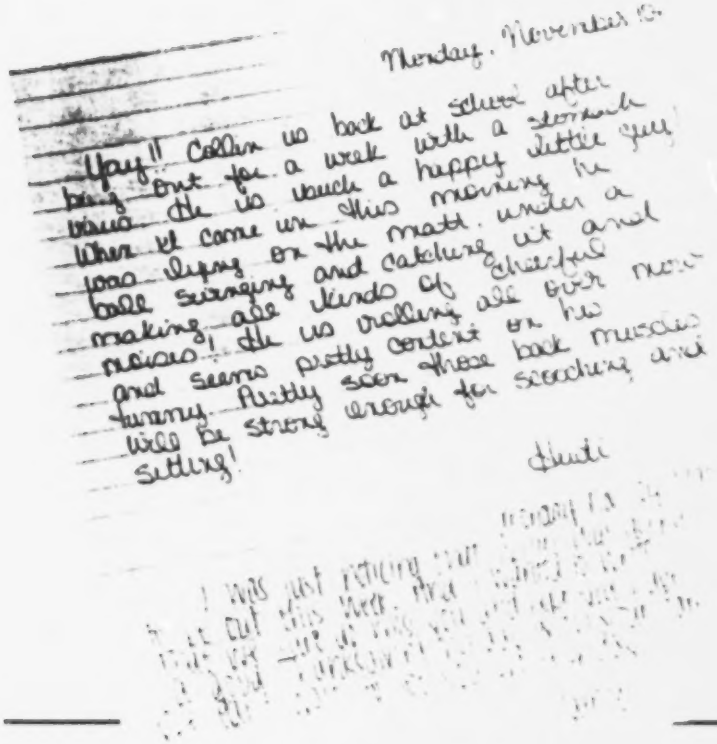
Recording Precious M
a picture story of journaling


Monday, November 6

Yay!! Colleen is back at school after being out for a week with a stomach virus. She is such a happy little girl when it comes in this morning to play on the mat. under a ball swinging and catching it and making all kinds of cheerful noises. She is rolling all over now and seems pretty content on her tummy. Pretty soon those back muscles will be strong enough for scooching and sitting!

Heidi

We keep a personal journal for each child. We write anecdotes about what we see the child doing and we add pictures. This helps parents feel more connected to their children's activities when they have to be away from them.

Call for Contributions

The next issue of *Infants and Toddlers* will feature language development.

We would like contributions of games played on the infant's body to increase awareness of their body parts, like for example, *This Little Piggy*.

We would also like anecdotal contributions of conversations and experiences with a young child. We know that each of you has had an exchange with a young child which you have shared with parents and others, that reminds us that the child is alert, thinking and feeling.

Please keep each contribution brief and clear. Deadline for the next issue is April 1. Each contribution printed will earn you one free additional issue of *Infants and Toddlers* which contains your contribution. Please include your source, if known. All contributions become the property of *Infants and Toddlers* and will not be returned.

Send your contributions to:
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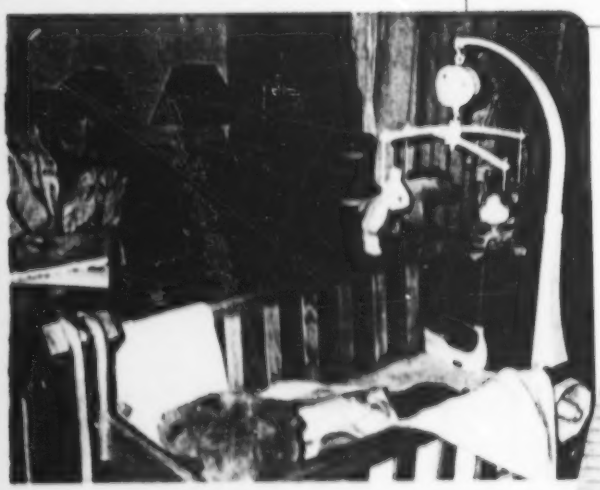
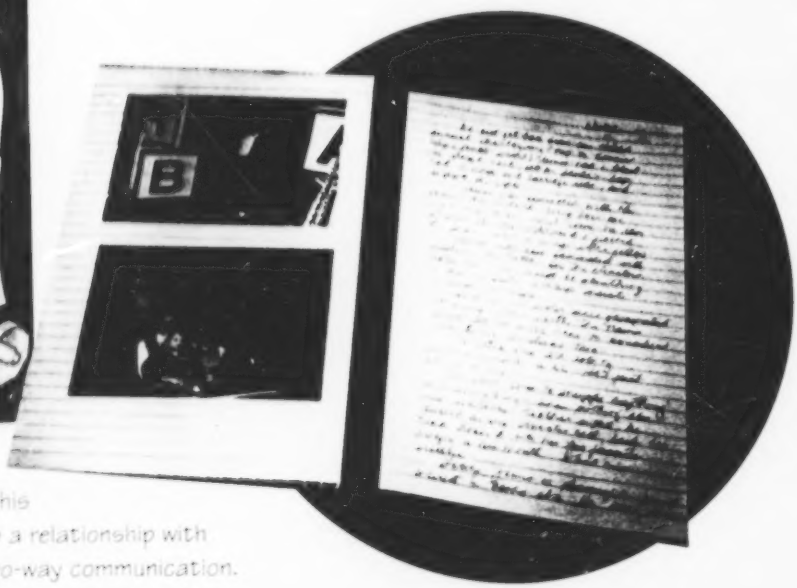
mories

Photographs were provided by Melisa Gregory of the infant class at The Hope Montessori Infant and Toddler Community in Creve Coeur, MO.





We encourage parents to take these journals home to read and to add to them. This interaction about their child helps us develop a relationship with the parents and provides another form of two-way communication. When a child leaves the infant program, the journal is kept by the parents.

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The Blossom

By Charles M. Uzzell

In this small world
we find ourselves as children
exploring an unknown planet
with a mere brain,
an alien self born
from the world of the womb,
destined for a world
beyond the senses.
But for now, we train
ourselves
with what we find.

This small flower
fell to my lap, teacher.
I smelled it,
pulled off the stem
and tasted
sweet and perfume.
Not usually in my class
or near the trampoline,
I held it close to my mind.

This small flower
forming memories,
this small flower
fallen.
I find it a treasure
so do not understand
why I should put it
in the garbage.
I do the jumping
and forget
the wayward blossom.

Charles M. Uzzell is an Infant Montessori Teacher at the Cary Montessori School in Cary, NC. Charles and his wife, Andy, the director of Cary Montessori, have three children, Molly,10, Elizabeth, 8, and Peter, 5.

Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow

One Mother's Story of Toddler Separation

By Marty Wourms Niederman

"If you go away, it will hurt my feelings."

This comes from the sad little mouth of my 2 ½ year old son, Myles. It is the fifth day of our separation process for the Toddler class. I'm sitting quietly in the big rocker. He is next to me in the little rocker. He's eager, at times, to venture away from me, enticed by some interesting work he sees another child put back on the shelf. I have enjoyed sitting in this neatly organized environment these past days. I now know the other children's names and personalities. When Myles mentions them at home, I can picture them and grin with familiarity.

I've observed the teacher's style and listened carefully to her choice of words with the children. I feel confident that she will tend to Myles' needs, keep him safe and teach him some wonderful new things during her mornings with him. I know that she has a loving, gentle touch and also a calm, firm, unbending side when needed.

I am amazed by the level of independence some of these tiny people have achieved. Andrew spilled his juice this morning, and wiped it up with the mini-size mop. When my son finishes with a work, he quietly puts it back on the shelf before he reaches for something new. Miracle of miracles, if only we could teach that skill at home! Myles is greeted each morning by a cheerful "Hi, Myles," from a new buddy.

As I kiss my son good-bye and leave the room, I am flooded with both sadness and joy. This parting is such sweet sorrow! I take a deep breath, put one foot in front of the other, braced for tears that don't come yet.

He'll be okay.

I'll be okay.

Marty and Myles

As I close the door behind me, a little tear rolls down my cheek. This is just one more step towards Myles becoming his own person, separate and wonderful, apart from me. My thoughts whisper words of love for him. I remind myself that when I come back he'll be playing happily. I can hug him and tell him how happy I am to see him as I listen to stories of his day.

Marty, shown here with Myles, is the mother of two—Zoey, 8 years old and Myles, now 4 years old. Marty has taught art at the Gloria Dei Montessori School in Dayton, Ohio, for 13 years. She has also taught for as many years at the Dayton Art Institute. This piece was written when Myles entered the Toddler Program at Gloria Dei.

Into the Mouths of Babes

Adapted from an article by Joel Tickner Copyright Greenpeace 1997

When you buy a toy for your child, especially one meant to be put in the child's mouth, such as a teether or pacifier, you expect that toy to be safe. However, new evidence demonstrates that soft toys made out of a common plastic, polyvinyl chloride (also known as vinyl or PVC), may be hazardous to your child's health. PVC is used to make toys ranging from teethers and pacifiers to bathtub toys, inflatable toys and dolls.

Alone, PVC is a brittle, heat- and light-sensitive material. Chemical additives called plasticizers are necessary to make the plastic soft. A class of chemicals called phthalates (pronounced tha-lates) are generally used to soften vinyl products. Greenpeace researchers have found that soft vinyl toys contain up to 40 percent of phthalates by weight.

Government studies have shown that high levels of these chemicals can leach out with everyday use. Chewing or mouthing, such as on a teether, can increase this leaching substantially.

While research on the health effects of the phthalates has only recently begun in earnest, laboratory experiments have linked them to liver and kidney damage, cancer, and reproductive dysfunction. Some kinds of phthalates have been shown to disrupt laboratory animals' hormonal systems. These complex and sensitive chemical messenger systems regulate important bodily functions such as embryo and organ development, brain function and behavior, growth, reproduction and immune system functions.

This means that every time a child sucks or chews on a soft PVC toy, that child is ingesting a potentially harmful substance. When these chemicals are sold for laboratory use, they carry a myriad of hazard warnings and instructions on safe handling. But a PVC toy, containing large quantities of the same chemicals, often carries the label non-toxic.

Realizing the dangers that soft PVC toys present to children, especially infants, national governments, retailers, and even toy manufacturers in Europe have taken action to remove soft vinyl toys from store shelves. These actions contrast sharply with the US Consumer Product Safety Commission's inaction. The Commission responded to a Greenpeace inquiry, "We will continue to gather and evaluate information on the chronic toxicity of specific phthalates, their use in children's articles and children's exposure to these chemicals."

A recent Greenpeace investigation has demonstrated that many common soft vinyl children's products such as back packs, tote bags, raincoats, and even play food contain harmful levels of two toxic heavy metals, lead and cadmium. Lead can cause brain damage and learning disabilities. Cadmium can cause cancer, kidney disorders and other health effects. Despite these known hazards, neither manufacturers nor retailers have taken sufficient action to protect children's health.

Alternative materials for producing toys include other plastics that don't require toxic additives. For our children's sake, it is up to consumers to demand that manufacturers produce and retailers sell toys and other products free of toxic materials. If you would like more information, contact Greenpeace at 1-800-326-0959.

Joel Tickner is a toxics policy advisor to environmental and labor groups, and other non-profit organizations. He is also a researcher and doctoral candidate in the Department of Work Environment at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

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FIRST STEPS TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

continued from page 7

Encouraging Independence at Nap Time

The process of self-calming works right along with encouraging independence during nap times. Many times when children first begin our program, they are very dependent at nap time. As with any other activity, we encourage independence gradually. We promote behavior that is most likely to proceed to the next level.

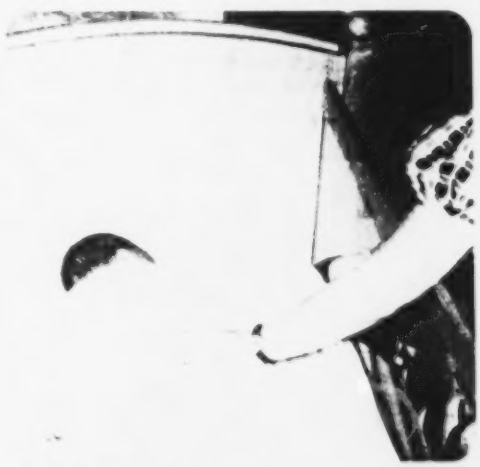
Until children become accustomed to us and their new environment, we help by following their normal routines, if that's what's needed. For example, we may have a child starting our program who gets rocked and takes a pacifier when going to sleep. When children become more comfortable with us, we start helping them gradually learn to put themselves to sleep.

The first thing we do is eliminate the pacifier. If the child is rocked to sleep with a pacifier, the common sense transition towards independence includes eliminating one of these dependencies. The pacifier is our first choice to eliminate because the longer that a child uses it the harder it is to eliminate. Also, rocking is more personal.

Steps Leading to Sleep

After the child has successfully eliminated one dependency, it's time to start working on the next. Our next step toward independence includes patting the child to sleep in the child's own bed. We use low beds in our program. When the child is not yet mobile, we keep both sides on the bed. As children become strong crawlers, we take one side off the bed so the children are able to crawl in when they are tired and out when they awake.

We usually begin this process by patting or rubbing the child's back as we sit right next to the bed. We eventually stop patting or rubbing and gently lay a hand on the infant's back. When the infant learns self-calming skills, we start to sit next to the child without touching.



Tracie pats a child to sleep.

Eventually we move away from the bed, but still remain in the child's view. Finally, the child is able to go to sleep without any assistance.

Although it may seem like a lot of work to help the children go to sleep on their own, they learn to self-calm and control their own body's needs. The children who go to sleep in their beds on their own tend to sleep better and to be much happier after naps.

Encouraging Independent Movement

We encourage independence in movement by providing many opportunities for children to develop their motor skills. Building motor skills begins early in infancy when an infant first turns to look at his mother or reaches to bat at a mobile. By providing aesthetically pleasing mobiles, these batting movements become more purposeful grasping movements.

We encourage crawling by providing a supportive environment. We give children tummy time starting at a young age. Tummy time enables young children to strengthen their muscles by practicing pushing up their upper trunk. If you wait too late to start tummy time, the child may have a hard time adapting to it because it's not a familiar position.

When we put infants on their tummies, we provide many objects for them to look at and reach for. As they are getting closer to moving forward, we provide materials that will entice their crawling, like balls and other objects that can roll just out of reach.

James crawls to the ball.

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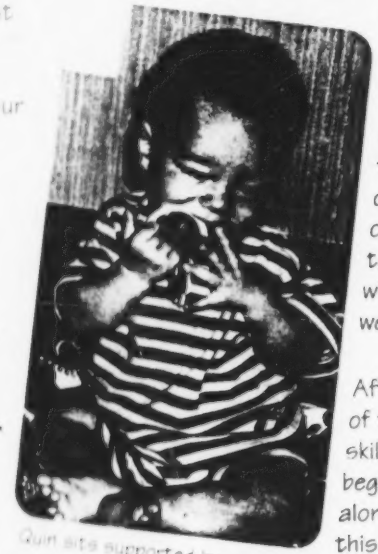
When children are starting to crawl and to build their arm and leg muscles, they are also building strength in their backs. We encourage sitting by first letting a child sit with support, for instance between our legs or on our laps. As the child gets stronger, we supply cushions for support. Finally, the child sits unsupported.


Quin sits supported by a cushion.

As the children become more comfortable with these new skills and become strong crawlers, they learn more challenging skills. They learn to crawl in and out of things and start crawling up things. We provide appropriate materials that are safe and the right height to practice these new skills without being stopped or assisted by an adult.

Standing Up

After children have mastered crawling, they move to something more challenging—pulling up to standing position. Children soon start to cruise around the furniture. We provide bridges with low steps. When children are ready, they can begin to walk holding on to railings, and to go up and down steps while standing and holding on.

The children begin to push objects around the environment as an alternative to crawling. These objects consist of tables, chairs, shelves and anything else that will move when they are pushed. We provide small carts that the children can push throughout the environment. As children feel more stable, they learn to maneuver the carts around objects and even to push the carts when they are weighted down.

After practicing all of these upright skills, the infant soon begins to stand alone. Many times this happens when the child holds on to something and lets go. Eventually, it happens when the child is in the middle of the room with nothing around. Finally, children begin to take their first steps on their own. Children always walk on their own when their body tells them they are ready.

James pulls himself to standing.

Walkers

We do not use walkers in our program. The number one reason is that walkers are dangerous. Although a walker may help children move around when they are not quite mobile, walkers don't encourage the infant to learn the balance necessary for walking. Walkers can also be harmful to the development of the child's legs. Since the child tends to stay on his toes more in walkers, the muscles tend to form in balls because the foot is always flexed.

Preparing for Toddlerhood

By helping the child progress toward independence in the areas that we have discussed, the infant becomes well prepared for toddlerhood. Before moving up to the toddler program, the two most important skills that we look for are walking and language. The child needs to be a steady walker who can handle the daily walks that the toddler classes take. Also, children need to be able to communicate their needs at any given time. This communication does not have to be through words, just as long as the teacher can figure out what is needed.

When children seem close to reaching toddlerhood, we help them prepare for an easier transition by providing activities to help improve some of their skills. Shortly after they learn to walk, we start changing the children's diapers while they are standing up. We believe this gives the children more independence by knowing what is going on with their bodies. They take part in the diaper changing procedure. They learn the natural sequence of pulling their pants down when going to the bathroom and pulling them up when finished.

We take the children with us when we go to do laundry or get food from the kitchen. We take the children on many walks and increase the length of the walks as they are ready. We encourage the children to

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FIRST STEPS TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

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help take care of themselves and the environment. They can put their dirty laundry in baskets, clear their places from meals, and wash up after meals.

Visiting the Toddler Class

As the time grows closer for the children to actually move to a toddler room, we take them to visit their new class. Eventually we leave them there for either part of or an entire day. We know that the transition to a new environment can be a difficult one, so we help make this transition as easy as possible.

Tracie Goebel

is currently the Infant Coordinator at Hope Montessori Infant-Toddler Community in St. Louis, MO. She has worked with infants and toddlers for eight years. Tracie received her Infant-Toddler Certification from CMTE/NY and is the proud mother of CJ, born in November 1997.

Melisa Gregory

works at Hope Montessori Infant-Toddler Community in St. Louis, Mo. She has worked with infants and toddlers for six years. Melisa received her Infant-Toddler Certification from MECA-Seton.

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